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**"DOVIE": A CREATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE EFFECTS OF THE ECONOMY  
AND PROGRESS ON ONE WOMAN'S LIFE IN POST CIVIL WAR APPALACHIA  
PRIOR TO WORLD WAR II.**

**A Thesis**

**by**

**Sharon Delaine Pritchard Price**

**Submitted to the Graduate School**

**Appalachian State University**

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

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**Major Department: Appalachian Studies**

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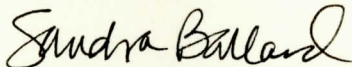
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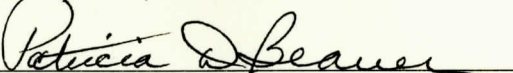
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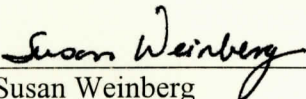
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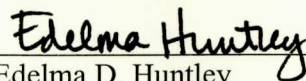
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## ABSTRACT

### “DOVIE”: A CREATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE EFFECTS OF THE ECONOMY AND PROGRESS ON ONE WOMAN’S LIFE IN POST CIVIL WAR APPALACHIA PRIOR TO WORLD WAR II.

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The period between the Civil War and World War II brought sweeping changes and extreme circumstances to the entire country, and many of these events were intensified by the isolation and harsh realities of life in Appalachia. In this work I propose to address the life of a fictional woman who lived in the mountainous regions of North Carolina. In doing so I intend to explore how many people thrived in spite of conditions, and why some towns have vanished from existence.

My previous research has turned up the fact that some men had to leave their homes and families to seek economic viability through outside employment.

Research for this work will focus on:

1. Types of work that the men would have found
2. Types of work that would have fallen to the females left behind
3. Domestic, religious, and political challenges
4. Reasons that thriving, self-sustaining villages ceased to be

Methods of research will include the reading of works compiled by historians as well as those histories created by people of the areas involved. It will be necessary to look through any census information from the period, and to take the major surveys of Appalachia into account. Oral histories from the Appalachian Collection could prove valuable as well as catalogs from the period, news clippings, essays, and other works.

In using the strategy of telling a story instead of recounting facts to support a claim cultural context becomes very important. It will be essential to know what the people would have worn, what they would have eaten, how they would have traveled, and the many details of life in that period. All of these issues would require research to insure the accuracy of the story.

This experimental thesis is designed to demonstrate competence in the field of investigation and research as well as knowledge of proper documentation and clear presentation. The work will draw on knowledge explored during my regular course work as well as provide a forum for expansion of knowledge regarding topics and ideas relating to Appalachian Studies.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Sandra Ballard, Patricia Beaver, and Susan Weinberg, my thesis committee, for their priceless assistance and guidance. Special gratitude goes to Sandra Ballard for reading the multitude of drafts that others did not see. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the staff of the Appalachian Collection of Belk Library, and especially to Dean Williams for his abundant assistance. I would like to recognize Arwen March, Larry Price, and Paige Pritchard for assisting with the story's continuity and accuracy. Individual thanks goes to Arwen March for her technical expertise and extraordinary attention to detail. Finally, I would like to thank the Graduate Department at Appalachian State University for allowing me to present this project.

## **Dedication**

This work of Appalachian Historical Fiction is dedicated to my husband, Larry J. Price. I would also like to extend this dedication to my family and especially to the next generation, Adrian, Zachary, Levi, Jaylin, and Jameson. Please consider this work as a sincere expression of my love.

Sharon Delaine Pritchard Price



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## Introduction

Past a laurel thicket and up a dirt road that leads from the Blue Ridge Parkway in Jonas Ridge, North Carolina, sits the mythical cabin belonging to Josiah and Dovie Poarch. Josiah and Dovie are loosely based on my own grandparents, James Azor and Charity Augusta "Gusty" Barrier, of that same community, but as the story unfolds the fictional couple takes on a life that becomes truly independent of the prototypical couple.

This experimental, creative thesis takes the form of a novella which explores the life of a fictional woman who lived in the mountainous regions of Caldwell and Burke counties in North Carolina. By creating this fictional character and her family I have conducted an exploration into the history and ethnography of the people of this area. My main goal was to discover how many people thrived in spite of challenging conditions, and why some towns have vanished from existence.

I simply used my own maternal grandparents as a springboard in the creative process. Azor and Gusty Barrier primarily provided questions that aid in Josiah and Dovie's evolution. Why did Azor travel away from his home to work for Ritter Lumber Company in three states, and why would he have moved to Colorado to work for two years? How did Gusty run the small family farm in Azor's absence? Azor was known as a healer, so how did that work? How must Gusty have felt on her wedding day, on the births of her children, and on their deaths?

To find my answers, I began talking with relatives, but the most prevalent answer was "I don't know, but I wish I did." My next step was to research the historical facts surrounding their era, 1876 through 1968, and I was surprised at the possible answers that I found for my questions. I will never know many of the facts surrounding the lives of

my grandparents, but weaving together historical information with family stories and pure conjecture brought me to the story of a mountain woman's struggles that I present here.

My first task in creating the stories was to create the characters themselves. I based their years of birth on my grandparents, and placed them in areas where they lived and probably spent years of their lives. Birth dates and death dates are relatively easy to establish, but descriptions of personalities are much harder to come by. I could not, nor did I want to, base the personalities of Josiah and Dovie on anyone else. Some traits are compilations of people I know and have known, but some aspects had to evolve in the writing process. I began with creating a profile for each major character. I decided that Dovie is a religious girl and cursing irritates her, and this comes out in the story. I also determined that her favorite color is red; she loves little pink roses; she laughs a great deal in spite of her hard life; she likes to eat apples in the mid-morning; cornbread and milk is actually her idea of the perfect supper; and although some of her relatives are against dancing, Dovie loves to dance and does so very well. Some of these facts have crept into the story, and some merely help me know Dovie as a person.

The next task was the creation of setting. Jonas Ridge and Steele Creek were logical settings from the standpoint of family history, and most people in these areas would have dealings with the Burke County seat, Morganton. My fascination with towns that have long since disappeared led me to the consideration of Mortimer and Kawanii. I was delighted to find in the course of my research that Ritter Lumber Company was once based in Mortimer, and their deforestation was in part responsible for the massive flooding that contributed to the town's demise (Sakowski 230-231). The ASU Eury



Appalachian Collection includes photos of the company's operation over the years, and there is also a small book written by a Jonas Ridge resident that states that my grandfather Azor worked for the company for many years (Johnson). Information on Kawanii was harder to come by, but through interviews I found enough to know that this Avery County community was fully developed and would have had a justice of the peace (Barrier).

Much of the same information offered about Azor and August Barrier in Earlene Johnson's history was also available in *The Heritage of Burke County* that was prepared by the Burke County Historical Society. In this version, the information is erroneously listed under the name Azor James Barrier as opposed to the name listed on my grandfather's tombstone and public records, James Azor Barrier. This information was submitted by one of my own sources, Pauline Barrier, who admitted that she had left out the story of Azor's return to Jonas Ridge, motivated by thinking of some red berries, as was reported in Earlene Johnson's book (55). Pauline Barrier thought that the story was "silly" and unworthy of a family history.

### **Azor Barrier of Jonas Ridge**

My grandfather, Azor Barrier, never knew his father. Six weeks after Azor's birth on January 10, 1876, his father, Jim, was killed (Johnson 55). According to family sources, he was shot in the back while sleeping near his whiskey still (Barrier, Pritchard, Ollis). When I was a child, "Aunt" Susan Barrier, then in her nineties, told my older brother and me her memories of that incident, and she added the information that his hand had fallen into the fire when he was shot. Azor's mother, Ella, later married Dock

Franklin, and they had three children. Azor grew up with two half-brothers, Salem and Marvin, and a half-sister, Laura (*Burke Heritage* 93).

According to the Burke County Heritage volume of 1981, Azor started school at the age of six with Minnie Wright as his first teacher. He attended school for three months each year for ten years, and worked on the farm the remainder of the time. When he was sixteen he was employed by Ritter Lumber Company, and eventually landed a position on the railroad crew building tracks for the Ritter trains (91). In 1898 he married Charity Augusta "Gusty" Henson whose home was on Steele Creek (Johnson 55).

About 1900 Azor went to Colorado, and worked for the Denver-Rio-Grand Railway until 1902. According to an account in Earlene Johnson's book on the history of Jonas Ridge, "he said he should have stayed there and sent after his wife and baby, because he was making good money, but he began thinking of some bushes that had beautiful red berries, and grew on the Bald Ground, and about his wife and child; so on Christmas of 1902 he came back and went to work for Ritter Lumber Company again" (55). When the company finished operations in his area, Azor went with them to Virginia and West Virginia where he continued to work some time (*Burke Heritage* 91).

According to the Johnson book, he took a job with the State Highway Commission in 1911 and after thirteen years he injured his hip to the extent that he could no longer work. In addition to attending to the family farming, and managing the family sawmill, according to Pauline Barrier, he remained active in affairs of the church, school, community, and politics.

He provided some of the labor and materials in the building of the Union Church in Jonas Ridge (shared by Methodist and Baptist), constructed sometime between 1900



and 1903 (Johnson 23). In 1933 the denominations decided to split and the Methodists bought the old church building for three hundred dollars according to Johnson (27). After the old building was torn down, Azor and his sons participated in the building of the Methodist Church on the same site.

While pointing out that Azor was very active in the school and community, Dane Pritchard emphasized that Azor's real passion was politics. Pritchard told of a time when the late Senator Sam Ervin, Jr., Special Prosecutor in the Watergate break in investigation of the Nixon era, took time away from a political banquet and regaled several of Azor's relatives with stories of their shared participation in Democratic campaigns.

According to Pritchard, Ervin was a somewhat frequent visitor to the Barrier household during the early days of his political career. When signing a copy of his book *Humor of a Country Lawyer* that my mother bought as a Christmas present for me Ervin wrote, "To Sharon Pritchard, granddaughter of my good friend of by-gone days, Azor Barrier, with all good wishes. Dec. 9, 1983. Sam Ervin."

Azor and Gusty had a total of fifteen children according to Pauline Barrier who now possesses the family Bible. Three of those died at birth, and there were two sets of twins. Those who were survived were Victoria (b June 17, 1899), McCoy (b April 13, 1901), Moran (b April 9, 1905), Earl (b June 11, 1908), Eula (b April 6, 1911), Yates (b October 20, 1913), Baxter (b August 13, 1916), Beulah (b August 13, 1916), Pauline (b April 24, 1919), Pansy (b April 3, 1921), Bernice (b June 2, 1923), and Harold (b August 31, 1925) (Burke Heritage 91). We can note from the birth dates that Baxter and Beulah were twins. Earl died at the age of seventeen from allegedly playing with dynamite caps.

Bernice had heart problems and died while pregnant with her second child (Barrier).

Today only Pauline and Harold survive.

Azor died August 21, 1958, in Morganton, North Carolina. Gusty was born August 12, 1880 and died January 4, 1968 (Johnson 51).

## **Memories of Azor Barrier**

Azor Barrier was a healer, and was said by family and community members to have had the ability to blow out fire from burns and stop blood from wounds. He also had knowledge of medicinal herbs, and he was the person to whom locals would turn when they needed a tooth pulled (Barrier).

Reba Clontz once burned her hand on the stove at Azor's home, and vividly remembers the event. She said that she had imagined that blowing out fire would take a lot of hard blowing, but that her grandfather gently took her hand and blew very lightly. She says that she does not recall any words that he said before blowing, but she recalled that the pain was intense before he took her hand and completely gone when he let go.

Azor was said by many to have had a quick temper and quick wit, and these were not completely tempered by old age. He loved to poke fun at children. One day while I was playing on the floor shortly before Grandpa's death my grandmother remarked, "Isn't that a pretty little girl. She's just like a little doll." "Pretty damned ugly if you ask me," Grandpa answered. He later turned to Grandma and told her that he was going to get out of that wheel chair and "take that pretty little younger there a fishin' on Camp Creek."



When it came to giving orders, Azor meant what he said. One day he demanded that the bigger children stop running through the house. They were running in the back door and out the front. As they came through again my brother, Dane Pritchard was in the lead. Grandpa took his walking cane, hooked Dane around the leg, and watched as his grandchild slid out the front door on his stomach (Pritchard).

Azor Barrier was not perfect, but he valued education and there was always food on the table for his family and anyone who happened by.

## **Healing**

In spite of family stories of Azor Barrier as a healer, I had never really attached significance to this claim until I encountered Lee Smith's novel, *Oral History*, and the character Granny Younger. This book spurred my research into this phenomena and its long standing tradition. In *Medical Medicine* Wayland D. Hand describes one of the ways that a person becomes a healer, "Widely known in this country as well as abroad is the supposed ability of posthumous children to cure diseases" (44). Here "posthumous" refers to children who are born after their father's death. Hand adds, "Extensions are made from the true posthumous child to those who for one reason or another have not seen their fathers..." (45). From this information we could assume that Azor Barrier's status as a healer was possible due to the murder of his father in Azor's infancy.

## **Narrow Gauge Railroading and Ritter Lumber Company**

Because Josiah worked for railroad companies in North Carolina and Colorado, the history of railroading became important in the creation of the story. Azor gained experience with narrow gauge railroads while working for Ritter Lumber Company.

There is a photograph in my collection of a young Azor with a railroad crew, and according to Pauline Barrier the original photo was sent to my grandmother from my grandfather in Colorado. Azor is mounted on a horse and the rest of the crew is standing and holding tools. This leads me to the idea that my grandfather was probably in the supervisory position. On the Colorado Railroad Museum Website I found that narrow gauge railroads were also necessary to traverse the mountainous regions of that state. So in my story Josiah's knowledge of narrow gauge railroading helps him gain this position.

Railroads brought progress to the mountain areas of North Carolina, and at one time the tracks crossed much more of the territory than they do today. The Carolina and North-Western Railway played a pivotal role in mountain commerce, as did the East Tennessee and Western North Carolina Railroad.

The East Tennessee and Western North Carolina Railroad (ET & WNC) was once affectionately known by locals as the Stemwinder and later Eat Taters and Wear No Clothes, and finally Tweetsie. According to Mallory Hope Ferrell in her book *Tweetsie Country*, "...it was the children who rode the swaying cars to numerous summer camps around Linville and Grandfather Mountain who gave the railroad a name that lasted... Tweetsie" (x). It is now part of an amusement park located between Blowing Rock and Boone.

I grew up with an alternate story concerning the name, Tweetsie. My grandmother, Augusta Barrier, often told me that locals could tell the weather by the sound of the train. She said that if bad weather was on the way, the sad sounding whistle of the Carolina and North Western could be heard throughout the Jonas Ridge community. Good weather could be expected if the perky sounding whistle of the East



Tennessee and Western North Carolina could be heard, and locals nicknamed the train Tweetsie. The doleful whistled Carolina and North Western also had a nickname, the "Cain't and Never Will" (Bumgarner ix).

My father told me that he would often hop onto this train when he was a boy, and the conductor would let him ride in exchange for shoveling coal. At that time the railroad ran from Johnson City to Boone, and tracks connected to a narrow gauge line that ran to the Cranberry Iron Works (Ferrell 5). There was also a Linville River Line that connected Cranberry and Pineola. This extension was built to serve the Ritter Lumber Company (Ferrell 26).

Ritter Lumber Company also connected to the Carolina and North-Western Railway. The Caldwell and Western Railway which ran into the mountains from Lenoir was absorbed by the Carolina and North-Western by 1910. William Ritter of Welch, West Virginia, whose logging empire stretched across the southeastern United States during the 1900's, owned the Linville River line at that time, and by September 1904 he struck a deal with C & NW president, William Barber, for the two railroads to meet at the proposed town of Edgemont. As expansion continued, "Construction orders were received for building thirty cottages in another new town, Mortimer, about three miles out of Edgemont" (Bumgarner 39-41).

Although tracks can be found in places, there is no train service to Cranberry, Pineola, or Boone now. There is no booming town in Mortimer now, and Edgemont is now little more than a wide place in the road. This area of the Blue Ridge is commonly lumped in with others in a discussion of past isolation, and current appearances would give that impression. But in the time that I've chosen as the lifetime of Dovie and Josiah,



the mountains were dotted with thriving towns connected to the outside world by rails of steel.

## Colorado and Other Connections

Railroading also brought progress to the western state of Colorado, and Josiah and Azor were involved in this process. A further connection between the two states came from Pauline Barrier who told me of going out to Grand Junction, Colorado, along with her older sister Eula to visit my grandmother's family. This led me to the idea that Josiah could be talked into seeking employment in Colorado by his wife's brother-in-law.

As one discovery led to another in my research, each step in the story led to opportunities to expand my investigation. My exploration into conveniences that Dovie's sisters would have used to try and entice her into moving near them directed me to look into the history of indoor plumbing in American homes. Descriptions of characters required me to seek information on fashion, household implements, and where various items could be bought. To decide that Dovie would make money by marketing galax did not lead me to go into that process in my story, but I had to know how galax is pulled, bundled, and sold. A trip by automobile to a hospital required that I decide what type of car Josiah would have owned, and then I had to know if that particular model had a backseat, a rumble seat, or no rear seating at all. The creation of each new character and situation required more investigation.

During interviews with my father-in-law, Frank Price who was born in 1907, the character of Uncle Jeeter began to emerge. Frank told me about his great uncle who was a Civil War veteran. When former Confederate soldier Oliver P. Carson would come to

visit Frank's childhood home, the old man would tell stories of the war and expectorate tobacco juice into the fireplace. I decided to create the character Uncle Jeeter who would tell stories in much the same manner, but with the addition that he would tell traditional stories in the manner of many of the storytellers that I had studied during the course of my folklore classes. Uncle Jeeter would also tell the local stories that I had heard in my childhood and was reminded of by Earlene Johnson's priceless book.

Uncle Jeeter needed a history, so I decided to try to find records concerning Oliver P. Carson. I also sought records from my own great-grandfather, James Harrison Henson, for this same purpose. Finding records of these two men in the reference work *North Carolina Troops 1861-1865: A Roster* led to one of the most exciting discoveries of my thesis research. My husband's ancestor, Carson, was not in the same regiment as my ancestor, Henson, but both men were taken prisoner during battles, and both were confined at Point Lookout, Maryland. The two were released within three days of each other in June of 1865 (Jordan Vol VI page 51 and Vol XIII page 261). Because both men would have walked home to Western North Carolina, one could imagine that they would very likely have sought out people from their area and traveled together. I decided that this would be true of Uncle Jeeter and Dovie's father, George Henry.

A drawing of the Federal complex at Point Lookout is available in *The Shenandoah in Flames* (85). Another volume in this Time-Life Books series, *Tenting Tonight: The Soldier's Life*, was the source of a tale told to the children by Uncle Jeeter. James I. Robertson Jr. wrote, "More frequently, however, Civil War prison officials were regarded by the men under their control as the embodiment of all the evils of the system." He adds the specific information, "And one witness reported that Point Lookout's Major



O what joy it will be when His face I behold,  
 Living gems at his feet to lay down!  
 It would sweeten my bliss in the city of gold,  
 Should there be any stars in my crown.

(refrain)

## Appalachian Literary Connections

It is important at this point to give credit to the many writers and novels that I have encountered in the curriculum. As I mentioned earlier, it is thanks to the works of Lee Smith that I finally found myself in fiction. It has also been exciting to see the work of Appalachian State University's own Charles Frazier come to national attention in the form of a National Book Award-winning novel and the hit movie *Cold Mountain*.

The greatest reward that I have received comes in the form of my opportunities to meet and talk with important writers through the Appalachian Studies program and my work as an intern with the Visiting Writers Series. This impressive list includes Appalachian writers such as Robert Morgan, Silas House, George Ella Lyon, and of course, Gurney Norman, for whom Dovie's youngest son is named. These writers went beyond inspiration and took time to give me encouragement and advice. Appalachian literature drew me into the Appalachian Studies program, and when I heard that there was at least the possibility of creating a work of fiction as an experimental thesis, I jumped at the chance.

Later when I was offered the opportunity of choosing a focus for teaching English 1100, I immediately knew that I wanted to work with Appalachian and Southern literature. A limit for supplemental books is set at twenty dollars, so only one novel could be chosen and other materials were selected from the rental anthology. I made a

set of poems and short stories available through Appalachian State University's e-reserve system. I would have preferred to devote the entire course to Appalachian materials, but then the time constraints would still be problematic.

I decided that Lee Smith's novel *Oral History* is an excellent novel to introduce the genre. This book provides an opportunity to start students thinking about family history and the cause and effect relationships that occur over the generations. It also creates a forum for discussing the elements that often show up in Appalachian literature such as superstition, healers, poverty, coal mining, and dialect. These topics are commonly found in Appalachian literature and most are important to Dovie's story. Coal mining is not a part of the economy of Dovie and Josiah's world, but the lumber industry was a vital part of the financial system, and its methods once caused major devastation to the landscape just as coal mining has in other areas of Appalachia.

### ***Community and Appalachian Literature***

The peaks and hollows of Appalachia present a beautiful panorama, but in times past they were isolated and forbidding. It took a certain type of person to thrive in this region. They were hearty individuals who held no illusions regarding the hardships of life and tightly knit communities sprang up from the necessity of helping one another. Additionally many people of the area were religious and held high ideals about what is right and wrong. The church was often the social as well as the spiritual force binding the community, and the family unit was also a powerful force. The pressure to conform to these institutions was great, and the individualism that brought these people to the area often clashed with the community mores.



One prime example of a person who struggled with the tension between individuality and community is Ivy Rowe, the protagonist of *Fair and Tender Ladies* written by Lee Smith. This collection of epistles follows Ivy throughout her life and the challenges that she has due to her individuality and the harsh lifestyle.

Ivy does not share Dovie's moral convictions and her faith in God and humanity. Ivy is headstrong and passionate, and when she finds out that she is pregnant she tells her mother, "Momma I am not going to get married. I don't care what you say..." (124). Her mother answers that they will keep the child and raise it themselves. Before the child is born the mother dies, and Ivy tells her reader, "I believe she went to join Daddy not God. She never cared for God... Don't preach, I said, and don't pray..." But, then Ivy has to lie down and Sam Russell Sage prays anyway. When the baby is born, Ivy writes to Miss Mabel Maynard, "I know you will be interested to hear from me because you acted so mean to me always and then you felt of my stomach the day I left, and ran off crying" (141). She continues by telling Miss Maynard that Joli has been born and adds, "She is the most beautiful baby in the world. So, I pity you!" (141). Ivy does not care what the community thinks of her status as an unwed mother, nor does she care that others know that her mother was not a religious person. She stands firm for what she believes is right for her.

Ivy is in many ways the antithesis of Dovie, but in an individualistic society, this type of woman and her story are important and prevalent. Ivy has affairs throughout her life, and at one point she disappears with the bee man, Honey Breeding. Late in life she reflects on these things, and she has no regrets. She writes "hairy booger" tales to her granddaughter against the wishes of the child's mother, and she refuses to send her



daughter her mother's burying quilt for a display. She does not change herself to fit what others want of her, and she does not change the minds of the community. She simply lives her life. Ivy never really changes, but as an Appalachian woman she finds her religious background inescapable, and she thinks about a hymn as she dies.

When Dovie's Colorado family visits, they try to talk Josiah and Dovie into joining them in their "better life." In real life, as in literature, there have been many visitors who try to "fix" the people of Appalachia and their lifestyle. In Lee Smith's novel *Oral History*, Richard Burlage is an outsider. He wants to help the community; he wants to participate in the community, but he doesn't develop any real respect for the town of Black Rock or its residents. In his diary, he calls the storekeeper, Wall Johnson, a grinning imbecile and refers to others in a similar manner. When invited to dine at a local resident's house Richard Burlage asks the woman of the house what he smells cooking, and she replies, "sallit" and later "creasy-greens" (115). Richard could have taken that opportunity to learn more about his neighbors, but he is too impressed with his observance that this is not salad. He is living in the community; he teaches and interacts with the residents, but he does not really learn anything about them. He is too busy holding onto his own values and identity to appreciate those of Black Rock. The only things in the area that he values is their church, which surprises him, and his sexual relationship with Dory Cantrell, whom he impregnates and leaves behind without ever knowing that she carries his child. He says that he loves her, but he feared what people at his home would think of her. Maybe Richard could not conform to the values and traditions of the community, but he certainly should have shown more respect.

There is a long standing tradition of outsiders who come into the Appalachian Mountains to teach and to repair what they perceive as an inferior group of people. Dovie's daughters squabble at the dinner table because a teacher has corrected the girls' speech, but she has not explained the circumstances in which their own dialect could be used and honored. One daughter perceives that her own dialect is simply wrong, and she makes an effort to speak properly. Another daughter holds onto her native dialect, and teases her sister for being pretentious.

Later the girls save money to buy pretty shoes which have been donated to the "rag shakin'." This is the name that the locals attached to the Crossnore School thrift store, now known as The Blair Fraley Sales Store. This is one of the more Appalachian friendly enterprises. Other attempts at helping the mountain people, such as the 1960's War on Poverty, have spawned numerous tales of disrespectful, but perhaps well intentioned, workers and even injurious programs.

Community is also an important issue in contemporary Appalachian literature. Like Richard Burlage, Lusa of Barbara Kingsolver's book *Prodigal Summer* is not native to the Appalachian area, but she moves there with her husband. She ends up owning the "homeplace," or family land, after the death of her husband, and at the beginning of the story she feels that she will never fit in with her in-laws. This attachment to family land and a sense of place is also a reoccurring theme in Appalachian stories including *Dovie*.

Kingsolver's character Lusa gains the respect of her in-laws after her sister-in-law's death by taking in her children, dealing with and ultimately hiring Little Ricky, and making the family farm a success by raising goats. This book is very rich in description, symbolism, metaphor, and all of those things that make a novel great. Kingsolver creates



believable characters, and weaves them together into an incredible tapestry of connection in a way that accents the interconnection of all life.

In a mountain community it is and was important to conform to a certain extent because survival depended upon cooperation of everyone. On the other hand, anyone who moves into a rough and hostile land would be an individualist or the offspring of a distinctively stubborn breed. This dichotomy presents an interesting source of tension, and tension is the stuff of great literature. Appalachian writers often respect individuality. It precipitates good writing and the creation of characters that readers enjoy and often admire.

The major portion of Dovie's story ends as World War II begins, but George Ella Lyon's characters from *With a Hammer for My Heart* could almost serve as the story's next generation. World War II veteran Garland is a tortured soul. He does not want to become part of his community, and he doesn't even want them to know his first name, Amos. The horror of World War II has given Garland his dim view of humanity, along with alcohol and his guilt at abusing his family when he returned from the war. He is living in a pair of old busses up on a hill when a teenaged girl named Lawanda knocks on his door wanting to sell magazines. In the course of their friendship, Lawanda gives him back his family and his community.

When the story of Dovie's family is extended, it would be important to explore the effect of the war on the people of the community. Young men were exposed to a different way of life, causing many to migrate to industrial centers in the north. By the same token, many would have returned to their homes, but they often resented the level of disrespect given to their culture by their fellow soldiers. Many were wounded



physically and psychologically, and they would have turned to alcohol as their only form of treatment, just as Garland did in Lyon's novel.

### ***Literature, Independence and Church***

Mamaw is another character from *With a Hammer for My Heart* who is at odds with the community. She is a healer, just as Josiah is and Azor was, and from the moment Mamaw walked into the church and told about Mother Jesus, she became an outcast in her community. Josiah is embraced by his community, but the two are connected by the attitudes of the post-war generation. Azor Barrier's children did not speak of their father's gift as adults, and their children were warned not to talk about it to outsiders. Mamaw's own daughter is ashamed of that part of her mother's life, but grandmother and granddaughter have a special bond. It is partly because of Mamaw's prayers that Lawanda is spared following the fire. "Mamaw said Mother Jesus was sending a big bird to take me," Lawanda tells the reader, "yeah like an eagle takes a mouse" (211). Part of Mamaw's healing involves touching the afflicted with feathers, and she whispers in Lawanda's ear, "This is awful, what you're going through, but Mother Jesus is with you, Lawanda, tied up in the pain-," and then she adds, "I can't touch you with feathers, but I'm brooding on you" (195). Mamaw is important to the community, but she does not change her ways or turn away from Mother Jesus to please them.

Dovie has a love for God and the church, but Josiah develops a problem with the Baptist congregation of the Union Church. In *Appalachia Inside Out*, Western North

Carolina native, Loyal Jones states in his essay “Old-Time Baptists and Mainline Christianity:”

The Old Baptists and the liberal mainline Christians, then, are at loggerheads over involvement with the world. The proponents of the social gospel, as well as other Christians who feel that there is no separation between religion and world, are critical of the fundamentalist Baptists for keeping aloof from the world – for being otherworldly. But the Old Baptists are equally critical of the more modern churches for getting too much involved with the world, and not being able to see the difference between the world and the life in the spirit. (412)

The Baptists of the Union Church were not then and still are not part of the Southern Baptist Church. They are an Independent Baptist congregation, and in times past, they would have judged Josiah as unworthy due to his participation with healing and making moonshine. Josiah is “churched” or cast out by the Baptist congregation, and he participates only with the Methodists.

Other fictional characters who certainly go against the community grain are Rondal and Carrie in Denise Giardina’s novel, *Storming Heaven*. They have an affair and get involved in coal mining union activity, but a more subtle form of rebellion against community traditions comes from the man Carrie marries, Albion. This young man was a drifter with his father, but his community is the church. Albion is a No Heller, a form of Hardshell Baptist that goes against the grain of traditional conservative religious thought.

Albion tells Carrie, "But one day Jesus Christ will wade right into Hell and haul out the sinners. Haul them out kicking and screaming" (134). Carrie asks what will happen with, "...the ones that wander all alone on this earth? The ones that lost their faith to believe?" (135). Albion replies, "Jesus will haul them out... That there is Jesus's job" (135). In most Baptist Churches, especially Appalachian Baptists, Hell is a place of eternal damnation. In most religions, the ungodly will suffer some sort of pain for all time whether in hell or cast out into utter darkness and destroyed forever, but Albion has gone against the grain and embraced a Jesus who will find salvation for all.

Additionally, Albion makes and drinks wine, and he dances. The narrator of this section, Carrie, tells us:

Albion was a good clog dancer. It was a cause of scandal to the Regular Baptists on Marrowbone Creek, whose preacher didn't hold with dancing . When confronted once in Henryclay with a Regular Baptist pining after his soul, Albion pointed out in the same calm way he defended his winemaking that King David "danced before the Lord with all his might" in the streets of Jerusalem. (142).

Albion will not back down from those in traditional religion, and later he does not back down in his union activity.

After Carrie and Albion are married, Albion continues to preach at the coal camp. As narrator Carrie tells us that foreign miners were left out of church services because, "The Catholic priest at Davidson was a company man who'd threatened excommunication for joining the union" (215). Although these people are considered as foreigners and are of another faith, Albion went up to Catholic women and asked them to



join in his church. After Albion's death during a strike, Carrie tells Rondal's mother that her husband was a preacher, and when she adds the information that he was Hardshell Baptist, Rondal's mother says, "Them's all lost." Carrie replies, "If my husband is lost then they aint no God" (247). Albion was a good man, and Carrie realizes that he has paid the ultimate price for his faith.

Another character who was steadfast in her religious beliefs is Ginny from Robert Morgan's novel *The Truest Pleasure* and later *This Rock*. Ginny is a Pentecostal, and her husband, Tom, does not share Ginny's beliefs, and the passion of the brush arbor meetings that she attends frightens him. She dances in the spirit, speaks in tongues, and at times even rolls around on the ground. Tom's disdain for Ginny's worship practices is shared by Ginny's sister, but even though Tom forbids his wife to attend Pentecostal services at one point, she continues to practice her faith until Tom's death.

After Tom's death, Ginny becomes a Baptist. Her son Muir wants to become a preacher, but his brother Moody has no religious ambitions. Ultimately Moody becomes a moonshiner, and he involves Muir in one instance of "running" moonshine, or driving it to a buyer. Both boys must fight pressure from each other and the community in order to remain true to themselves. Muir becomes a minister in spite of Preacher Liner's attempts to prove that he is not cut out for that calling, but Moody pays the price with jail and ultimately his life.

In her book *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History* Deborah Vansau McCauley writes:

Appalachian mountain religion has been portrayed monolithically in stereotypical terms that focus on an archetype called the "mountain

preacher” who oscillates between two extremes: as either a strict, suffocating Calvinist or an emotionally unstable religious fanatic with a penchant for serpent handling. In fact, mountain religion, like mountain preachers, exists only as a range or spectrum of worship life and traditions sharing “regional” characteristics. This claim, at the onset, is as much a thorny nutshell as “mountain culture.” (53).

In using the Union Church of Jonas Ridge, I hope to expand the conversation of what is normal for the region. Here two denominations coexisted and attended each other’s services for decades. According to Earlene Johnson, services were held in various homes during the early part of the nineteenth century, but “About 1880 the church services were moved to the little one room school house” (22). She continues by pointing out that ministers at these services were both Baptist and Methodist. According to Johnson, J. P. Barrier deeded land to the Methodists and Baptists on August 2, 1890 (22); she adds that many members became dissatisfied and the Methodists bought the building in 1933 (27). Today the two congregations meet just across from each other on what is now known as Dogwood Knob Road, and they share a potluck dinner each summer on “homecoming” day.

How do the two denominations coexist after many decades of separation and ideological differences? In his essay “Appalachian Humor” from *Appalachia Inside Out: Volume 2: Culture and Custom* Loyal Jones points out “there are probably more jokes about religion in the mountains than about any other subject” (615). Maybe it’s the legendary mountain humor that adds to the cohesiveness of the churches and the community. Jones continues with the idea, “Mountaineers are levelers, believing that



each is as good as another but no better. Such people are quick to note tendencies in themselves for pretending to be what they are not, and they make a joke about it" (615).

## Politics and Economy

The setting for Dovie and Josiah's story is the Appalachian Mountains, an area often defined in terms of poverty and isolation. Although before the twentieth century, the area was defined in terms of geography, political agenda now plays an important part in the definition of the area and its character. In the Glossary of his book *People, Politics and Economic Life*, Thomas Plaut defines Appalachia as "A mountain region in the Eastern United States, currently defined by the federal government as 399 counties in 13 states" (97). He also points out that in 1921 sociologist John C. Campbell described Appalachia as including 256 counties in 9 states, and adds that counties were added at the time of the Appalachian Redevelopment Act of 1965. He sites weak economies as the reason for adding area to the designation (85). In fact, poverty is a word often associated with the area, so one would think that the economy of the area in terms of partisan politics.

Appalachia in general and Jonas Ridge in particular have a strong tradition of political battles and partisan loyalties. Sitting on the boundary of highly Republican Avery County, Jonas Ridge currently has 452 voters registered, with 173 Democrats, 204 Republicans, 3 Libertarians, and 72 Unaffiliated (Suttlemeyer). Although Republicans have recently taken the lead, the community is historically a Democratic stronghold, and continued to be so as late as the 1980's when I last worked at the polls there. In the 1980 presidential election the turn out was over 90 percent, which was usually the case in



previous times. We find evidence of strong Democratic loyalty in the story of the 1888 election in chapter ten. This story was taken from the Johnson history.

This tendency toward a Democratic majority in an Appalachian community is not the norm. According to Gordon B. McKinney:

Unlike most southern whites in the years between 1861 and 1865, the mountain men resisted secession and often fought against the Confederacy. After 1865, many mountain voters joined the Republican party and remained the only large group of white southerners in the party until the 1950's. A number of interpretations have been offered to explain this phenomenon, but they have all shared the common idea that there was something unique about the mountain. These unusual character traits or patterns of loyalty were generally regarded as unchanging. This mountain republicanism became almost an inherited physical abnormality, similar to possessing six fingers. (3)

Why, then, was there a Democratic majority in Jonas Ridge for many years? Perhaps the close ties with the Burke County seat, Morganton, played an important part, or perhaps the legendary mountain familism was the source. Or it could be, as Loyal Jones points out in his essay "Appalachian Values" from the collection *Voices from the Hills*, "We relate personally to politicians who catch our fancy and appear trustworthy. FDR won over great numbers of formerly Republican counties with his personal charm" (515).

John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney explain the political rivalries in *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War*, and their

explanation may give an insight as to why Jonas Ridge would have held a Democratic majority:

Antisecession Confederates like Zebulon Vance were forced from power for a period, but by 1876 they had assumed control of the dominant Democratic Party in the state and the mountain region. Unionists and newly enfranchised blacks joined the Republican Party, and they struggled in an uneasy alliance to wrest control of the state and local governments from their hated opponents. Although the spirit of the war remained in politics, there was no glorification of the war, which so many highland residents recalled with painful memories. (267)

Clearly the issue of partisan politics in Appalachia is an intricate one. Many heated political battles were spawned by this blend of loyalties.

Jones reinforces the idea that mountain communities take great interest in elections, "We have an abiding interest in politics. Contrary to popular myth we do turn out in significant numbers to vote. In fact it has been a problem in some counties to keep people from voting several times" (515). Stories of payment for votes and voting by the dead abound in the folklore of the area.

## **In Conclusion**

Pride, community, love, magic, faith, sense of place, and humor are just some of the elements that are common to Appalachian life and literature. In creating this experimental thesis, I hope that I have managed to include some of these characteristics and to bring the uniqueness of Appalachia to life.

Allen Brady galloped his horse through crowds of prisoners, trampling those who were unable to step aside" (119).

Uncle Jeeter's visit gave me the opportunity to add other visitors to the scene and to bring music into the story. It was my involvement with the Appalachian Studies program that enhanced appreciation of bluegrass music, and my newfound interest in bluegrass prompted me to find the source of one of Augusta Barrier's favorite sayings. "If you'll thread this needle for me, (or whatever the task of the moment would be), there will be many stars in your crown," she would tell me. I recall her singing "Will There Be Any Stars", and I was delighted to hear the old tune again on a bluegrass compilation album.

I have often toyed with the idea of changing the title of this work from *Dovie* to *Will There Be Any Stars*, because the song somehow captures the essence of the character, and of my grandmother.

**Tune: "Will There Be Any Stars"**

**John R. Sweeney 1837-1899**

**Text: Eliza Edmunds Hewitt 1851-1920**

**I am thinking today of that beautiful land**

**I shall reach when the sun goeth down;**

**When through wonderful grace by my Savior I stand,**

**Will there be any stars in my crown?**

**Refrain:**

**Will there be any stars, any stars in my crown**

**When at evening the sun goeth down?**

**When I wake with the blest in the mansions of rest**

**Will there be any stars in my crown?**

**In the strength of the Lord let me labor and pray,**

**Let me watch as a winner of souls,**

**That bright stars may be mine in the glorious day,**

**When His praise like the sea billow rolls.**

(refrain)



I feel that my love of Appalachia and all things Appalachia was given to me before my birth as a favor from a benevolent creator, but my true appreciation of Appalachian literature and culture is a gift of the Appalachian Studies program. I hope that Dovie's story is a way for me to give back something to this outstanding program.

## Chapter 1 - Dovie (1885)

The little girl rolled over to wipe her dirty nose with her apron then turned to rest her head in the crook of her elbow. All she could see from her hiding place under the porch was the feet of her family as they passed her by. There were more shoes than there normally would have been, and she tried to match the shoes with the people.

"Dovie, please come out, honey."

Dovie looked over to where her older sister Ida knelt beside the family's two room cabin. The rock pillars held the floor up just enough for a little girl to scramble underneath the house but not far enough to allow her fifteen-year-old sister under to pull her out.

Dovie ran her fingernails back and forth in the moist black dirt and held them up to look at them. She had no intention of ever coming out. She would live under here, and she would die under the house when she was an old, old lady. Let them leave. Let them go to Colorado without her. They would be sorry. No person would ever see her face again.

"Dovie Ellen! Come out from under the house this instant, or I'm comin' after you and whup the blood out of your hide!" It was a different voice this time.

The child tried to imagine her oldest sister, Victoria crawling under the house and knew that it would never happen. She didn't think Victoria could even fit under the house as far as her soft middle section.

"Don't be so hard on her. I think you forget that she's only been on this earth for five years. How would you feel in her place?" Ida scolded her older sister. "Dovie baby, we'll be back for you. Colorado is a long hard trip away, and you'd hate going that far

from Steele Creek. It would be too hard for a little girl like you. Honey, come out so we can see you before we go.” Ida’s voice was enticing, but the child did not move or answer. If the trip was too hard for Dovie, how could it be any easier for her two-year-old sister, Cora?

“Luther, can you get her out?” Victoria sounded exasperated. Dovie saw the face of Victoria’s husband appear at the edge of the porch.

“Come on out, little ‘un. Ain’t nobody gonna whup you.” Luther would be squinting in an effort to see her in the darkness. Dovie didn’t answer, and she held very still.

Luther got up and spoke with her older sisters in soft tones. Dovie heard her father’s voice. “Let her be. She’ll come out.” Later she heard the adults loading trunks into the wagon. Each member of the family returned occasionally to try to coax Dovie out or to say goodbye. She had hoped that they would stay or that they would tell her to come out and go with them, but despair soon took hold.

Dovie’s stomach ached. She was hungry, but she was too angry to care. They were leaving her behind, and taking Cora. She had never let herself believe that they would really go and leave her. She wouldn’t have liked leaving Papa and Sam, but she did not want to be torn away from Cora. She cried again.

She first began wailing during breakfast when Victoria had announced that they would actually leave their North Carolina mountain home this morning, and she had rarely stopped for the past two hours. When Luther hitched the horses to the wagon and brought them to the front of the house, Dovie screamed and banged the door shut as she ran out. She crawled under the house before anyone could stop her.



Over the past few months Victoria had explained several times that they were going to Colorado to begin a better life, and that they would return for her as soon as they could. There was only room for little Cora who needed Victoria and Ida to take care of her since their mother had died last winter. Her mother's death had left Dovie feeling desperately sad and alone, but being left behind was more than she could stand.

Again and again, Dovie had heard all of the talk of moving. Luther and Victoria said that they would leave in June, but grown people were always talking about doing things that they never did. Now she could hear them talking about Luther's older brother, Bart. Dovie knew that he had gone to Colorado during the hunt for gold and the silver strikes, and now he owned a store. Packages from Big Bart were always exciting.

"You know, I just thought Bart was a dreamer and a fortune hunter." Dovie could see her father's big dirty boots as he stood talking with Uncle Luther. "I thought he'd mine awhile then come back with his tail betwixt his legs, but he did good with this store idea. He'll be the big man around Grand Junction."

Dovie reached into her apron pocket for her spool doll, but it wasn't there. Where was it? She had missed some of the conversation, but now Luther sounded excited.

"Yep, George Henry," he told her father, "it's just fifteen years till the year 1900. Some people say that the turn of the century will bring the end of time, but I think it's just the beginning of great things for me and mine."

Dovie didn't know what the end of time was, but she knew that her world was ending. She planned how she would manage living out her days under the cabin. She would lure old Scruff under the house and teach him to bring her food somehow. She would simply stay where she was forever. She had felt the need to go to the outhouse

some time before, and when she finally wet her pants she decided that it really wasn't that bad. She watched a spider on the bottom of one of the floorboards, and at first it had scared her, but she decided that the spider was her only friend and protector in the world.

"Dovsie," she heard her little sister call from the puncheon floorboards above her head. "Dovsie, git me."

Dovie rested her face on her arms and began wailing again.

Papa came out and tried enticing her, "Luther and your sisters are about to go now. Get on out and say your goodbyes. Be a big girl, now. You'll be sorry if they leave and you didn't come out to speak."

The child only cried louder. She heard the others talking softly, and then her older brother, Sam crawled under the floor beside her.

"Dovie, they're leaving me here too." The little girl only snubbed in reply. "Shoo, Lord have mercy, you stink. I can't stand it under here with you. If you don't come out soon you'll stink the whole house up." Dovie didn't care.

Sam held still for a few minutes then finally said, "Dern, it's creepy under here. I hate to leave you, but I gotta get outta here." The boy crawled out and she was alone with her spider once again.

She distracted herself by creating a little dirt village, but stopped suddenly when she heard people getting into the wagon. She heard Cora calling out as loud as her little voice would carry, "Bye Dovsie. Bye. I wuv you. Come see us." Then suddenly she heard the wagon pulling away.

Dovie knew that they had really left, and she shook with sobbing. Her mouth was dry, and her throat hurt when she finally heard Papa and Sam move about the house



above her. Dovie couldn't take the dryness and darkness any more. She crawled out and ran down to the creek below the spring. She rinsed off her filthy hands then cupped them to scoop up a drink of water. Sam was right. She was cold and dirty from being under the house for so long and she did stink.

Looking around her, she pulled off her clothing and threw it all into the creek. Her father would surely whip her if he caught her running around naked, but she doubted that he knew that she was out from under the house. She scrubbed at her clothing then tried to wring each piece out by sections. Then she splashed her body with the icy water of the stream. Taking the wet clothing, she ran further down the creek to the edge of the blackberry patch and spread her things out on the limbs of a small birch tree. She wished that the berries were ripe so she could have something to eat. Instead she broke off a bit of birch limb and went to a nearby mossy bank where she often played. She sank down onto the warm softness of the vegetation there and chewed on the sweet, fragrant birch.

"How can the sun still shine?" she wondered. Its warmth felt soothing on her bare skin, but then she thought of animals. If a squirrel or a rabbit would come along they would see her nakedness. Worse still, a bear or bee might come along and she would have to run home to escape, and cause herself terrible trouble. "Just let them go ahead and eat me up," she thought sullenly. "What do I care anymore?" She watched the clouds drift through the summer sky and remembered that her mother could see her from heaven. Mommy was probably pretty mad that Dovie was sitting outside naked, so the child moved over behind a laurel branch to hide herself.

She felt that God would not let her Mother stray far away from their mountain home, so Dovie decided that she might not want to leave after all. It was too far for



Mother to fly from North Carolina to Colorado and the others would surely sense that they were not being watched over. Victoria and Papa had both told Dovie that Mommy was in the ground waiting for Jesus to return, but she didn't believe them. Granny Flossie had told her that Mommy was now an angel, and that idea was far more appealing. She decided that the others would miss the presence of their angel mother, and they would miss Dovie. They would then return and beg her forgiveness for having gone away in the first place. She decided to put her clothes on as soon as they were mostly dried and sneak back into the house.

She knew they would be back to stay, but it might be a long time. She heard Cora's voice in her mind calling "Bye, Dovie," and sobbed again. She sat under the laurel bush as sorrow flooded her, and she felt the tears fall from her face onto her bare thighs.

## Chapter 2 – Dovie (1897)

It seemed that Dovie always heard hammers in the year 1897. The little town of Mortimer was experiencing an economic boom, and Dovie was eager to be part of all the excitement. The Caldwell County town that had been built to serve the lumber camp had taken on a life of its own. The town was near the Burke County line, and Dovie loved to go into town on Saturdays to watch as country people from both counties came there to trade. Uncle Cabe's blacksmith shop was always busy, and Aunt Jane had enough business at the restaurant to send for Dovie to help her and her daughter, Luella.

Having grown up at Steele's Creek, Dovie was more accustomed to the quiet and routine of her father's small farm, but this exciting time was far more interesting for a young woman. Dovie, who was now eighteen, and her sixteen-year-old cousin were treated to stick candy when they made the very first purchase at the new store. The two girls came up with excuses to be in town where a gristmill was being built as well as another church. They stood discretely across the street with other girls of the town, and shared information that they had picked up at home. A post office was planned, and the store's owner was already talking of building an extra room just for cloth and sewing notions.

Men from nearby logging camps came into town on the weekends, and one of them was a tall, blonde young man named Josiah Poarch. When Josiah first walked into her aunt's café, Dovie wanted to run up the stairs and hide in the storeroom. Something about him made her want to stare and look away all at once. Maybe it was the way his face lit up when he noticed her glancing his way for the first time. Maybe it was all in

her imagination because of the discussion that Dovie had with her cousin Luella just that afternoon.

Luella had been braiding Dovie's waist length, black hair and chattering away.

"I'm so glad you're here, Dovie. It's like having a sister my own self. We can do so much together. Daddy said he'd take us all to the carnival down in Morganton this summer. You ever been to a carnival?"

"Once."

"I've been several times. The last time I had the gypsy woman read my future."

"What'd she say?"

"She said I'd marry a tall, dark feller and he'd treat me like a queen. She said we'd live in town and drive a buggy."

"Well I'll be. I hope she's right." Dovie fingered a glass figure of a dancing woman from the dresser before continuing. "I had a gypsy woman read my future too, but she didn't know what she was talking about."

"How come?"

"Well, I had to slip off and do it, because Daddy'd skin me. I'm sure he knowed it was a big waste of money. Sam waited outside, and I went into her tent. Anyway, she said that I'd marry a tall man with light hair and eyes, and she said I'd have a big bunch of young'uns. She said I'd live far away from my family and have a long, hard life, but I'd be happy too."

"That ain't much to tell a girl about..."

"I was so mad. I went out and grabbed Sam by the arm and pulled him away from there. Then I took off running way across the fair ground."



"I reckon you didn't want no light-haired man," Luella laughed as she began winding Dovie's hair into a bun.

"Well, I had my eye on – on this feller who's about my height and dark headed. That was couple of years ago. Now I don't care if I ever get married, and I sure don't want no big bunch of young'uns."

"Well, here, your hair's done. Do you like how I did it?"

"Law, Luella, you ought to do that for a living."

"Wouldn't it be grand to make a living just fixing hair for ladies?"

"Why, little gal, you're a miracle worker. This stringy mess of mine looks the best it ever has."

"Your hair ain't stringy," Louella had said brushing a bit of lint from Dovie's shoulder.

Now in the view of the blonde young man in the dining room, Dovie didn't worry about her hair or her dress. She feared that her face was bright red every time he looked at her. She kept to the kitchen as much as possible, but her job here at her Aunt Jane's little restaurant was to serve food to the customers and not to hide away.

Dovie had become used to strange men watching her, but she couldn't decide why this one was different. He hadn't been forward, and he was perfectly polite in asking for a second glass of milk. She finally decided that there was something attractive and peaceful about him. Maybe it was the way the light melted in with his buttery yellow hair, or the way he paused before taking his first bite of potatoes, as if he were taking a moment to silently ask the blessing.

That night as she and Luella chatted easily in their shared room, she wanted to ask her cousin what she thought of the young man, and at the same time she was afraid to.

“Law have mercy, Dovie, you’ve got the purtiest clothes I ever did see. Where’d you get all these dresses?”

Dovie sighed. She watched as her red-haired cousin laid first one then the next dress out on the bed for inspection.

“There ain’t so many. You have a lot more clothes than I do,” she finally said. “My sisters out in Colorado send them to me.”

“Yes, but yours are a sight prettier than mine,” Luella said as she began placing hair ribbons with the dresses.

“Katherine and Ida make fine dresses. They send me some from time to time, and they even sent them to little Pokey.” Dovie sat down in front of the long mirror and studied her reflection sadly for a moment.

“She was a pretty little thing. She was just a little bitty girl when I saw her.” Luella was still intent on arranging the dresses. “I never can remember her real name.”

“Pocahontas. She was named Pocahontas after the Indian girl in the story of Captain John Smith. I didn’t much like it at first, but it sure grew on me. Law, I thought I’d die too when she went. I miss her all the time.”

“She was four?”

“She would have been four if she’d have lived another month. She was born on the tenth of March. She’d be five and a half now.”

“You’re real close to her mother, ain’t you?”

"She's always been just like a real mother to me."

Dovie remembered the day when her father had brought his new wife home with him. At first she had been shy toward her stepmother, but soon she decided that having a mother was like a little slice of heaven. She didn't remember a lot about her own mother except that she loved her. One day Dovie had leaned against her stepmother and said, "I don't think my Mama would mind if I call you Mama Gaynelle, do you?"

Mama Gaynelle had held her close and said, "I think your Mama would be real happy that we love each other. Don't ever forget your Mama. I know she loves you from where she is, but I'd like the chance to love you like she would herself if she was here."

Gaynelle had treated Sam and Dovie like they were her own, and it didn't stop when she had Luke, Hampton, Edgar, Lloyd, Tom, and Pokey. They were like any other big family.

Dovie's chest hurt with longing for home, but she didn't mention it to Louella. Louella was an only child and couldn't know how it was to be the oldest, caring for the younger children as if they were more than siblings. Dovie watched Louella's intent expression as she switched ribbons to see which went best with each dress; she was like a pampered child preparing to dress her elegant dolls. In spite of the pretty gifts from her older sisters, Dovie had always worked hard, and she knew how to repair a dress and then later remake it by turning the cloth from the inside out where the wear wasn't as evident. She made generous aprons to protect her oldest dress for the everyday milking and scrubbing.

As Dovie watched her cousin, she wondered what it would have been like to have your very own mother brush your hair for your first day of school. When Gaynelle had



taken a seven-year-old Dovie in hand, Sam had been in charge of helping her get ready for school, and he had made her wear the same braids for a week at a time, so that he wouldn't have to try and plait them again each morning.

"Can I borrow this blue dress to wear to church tomorrow? I'll take it off as soon as lunch is over," Louella asked.

"You can if you'll braid my hair up for me again; I've got it in a big mess."

"Here, let me have that..."

Luella moved over and took the brush from Dovie's hand and began brushing the braiding out of the dark hair. The room was simple and pretty with blue curtain and an oval rag rug. There was a four-poster bed, a wardrobe, and dresser. Dovie sat on a stool in front of the freestanding mirror with Luella behind her.

"I don't blame you. Dad gum, you've run till ever pin I put in is half out. You ought to let me wind it up in a sort of figure eight tomorrow morning. And we could wind a ribbon in with it."

"That sounds pretty good. You could use that yellor ribbon."

"Your sisters are sure good to send you all of these things."

"Yes, they are. I think they're sorry that they didn't come for me when I was little. They needn't be though. They asked, but I wouldn't leave Mama, and they asked later, but I never would've left Pokey." Dovie gently wiped under each eye with her hand.

"Well, I'm sorry that you lost your baby sister, but I'm glad you're here. Maybe the good Lord let you come to us so that your heart can start healing a little bit."

"It helps to stay busy."

"You'll be busy here. That's for sure. There's church, and the restaurant, and there's that big ol' tow headed boy who can't keep from watching every step you take."

Dovie saw her cousin's wicked little grin in the mirror.

"What boy?" She had hoped to discuss this, but now she was shaken.

"That 'en that makes you turn red and run out of the room."

"I didn't... I... What boy do you mean?"

Luella laughed loudly and patted her cousin's cheek. "That one that likes you and you like him too, and don't you dare sit there and deny it."

"How you talk. You silly thing."

"One time when you ran into the kitchen, he asked if we would all be going to the new church when it's finished. And he asked if we were all going to the ground breaking after preachin' tomorrow. But the funniest thing is that while he was talking to me, he kept looking at the kitchen door."

"He just better watch hisself. I might just stay home if that big old gawky thing's gonna be there."

"You'll go because Papa will expect it, and because I'll tell that boy you like him if you try to play hooky."

"You will not..."

"You'll wear that yeller ribbon and that white blouse with all the yeller trim. You'll be pretty as a picture, and I'll be proud as punch, but promise me one thing."

"And that is?"

"Don't run off with that boy and get married before we can go to the carnival."

"You!" Dovie covered her face with her arms. "I'll get back at you little gal."

And Dovie was secretly pleased.

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John Josiah Poarch walked boldly up and stood beside Dovie Ellen Teems as the groundbreaking for the new church began. He had kept his respectful distance during preaching, and when Dovie stole a glance she couldn't help but admire the sober young man in the neat brown suit. Some attempt had been made at plastering down his hair, but the disobedient curls had returned.

"Mr. Teems, may I escort your girls home?" he asked Uncle Cabe. "My friend Jacob will be with us along with his fiancée Abigail and her little sisters and brothers."

Uncle Cabe looked playfully from Luella to Dovie. "Yes, they may go if they would like to join you, sir."

Luella called to her sweetheart and grabbed Dovie's hand pulling her along. "Ben, come on!" When they reached the road Luella turned to Josiah. "Dovie, may I formally introduce you to Mr. Josiah Poarch? Mr. Poarch, this is my cousin from Steele Creek, Miss Dovie Teems."

Dovie poked her cousin in the ribs in attempt to stop her mock formality. She finally relaxed as the smaller children began chattering about the new church and then those ridiculous things that small children discuss. As the young men and women walked along watching the children run and play, Dovie noticed that Josiah seldom spoke. *He might be as nervous as me*, she thought.

Eventually he began joking with the others, and finally he asked her about her home and her family. As they came to Aunt Jane and Uncle Cabe's house, Josiah took



his leave with Jacob and the others, and looked into Dovie's eyes as he promised to see Louella and Dovie again soon.

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A pattern was established. Josiah would take his meals at the restaurant when he came into town almost every weekend. Each Sunday the group of young people would walk home from church together. Then one Sunday morning Josiah showed up just as Dovie was helping her aunt and cousin prepare breakfast. Aunt Jane and Luella found excuses to leave the kitchen to the two.

"I hear your Aunt Jane will be taking over the canteen down at the logging camp."

"Now whatever makes you think a thing like that? It's too rough at the logging camp for us."

"Good," he seemed relieved. "You'll be staying right on here?"

"Not when business falls off. I expect it'll calm down next fall and winter."

"Then you'll be leaving?"

"I reckon."

"Then you'll be all the way up at Steele Creek with your family?"

"That's the way of it. I think they just called me in for my own good anyway. I don't think they really need me all that much. They just wanted to get my mind off..."

"Your little sister?"

"Yes. Mama and Daddy will want me home soon though."

"And is anyone waiting for you at home?"

"Mama and Daddy are waiting."

"Then there's nobody else?"

"Sure there is. I've got brothers too."

"I mean, Dovie..."

Dovie opened the big old wood stove and picked up the biscuit pan with two potholders.

"Do you have another feller besides me?"

Dovie turned around and burned her hand on the side of the oven, dropping the pan and the biscuits onto the floor.

"Aww heavens, Lord have mercy upon me. Aww Aww Aww." She cried out in pain as she ran for the water pail.

"No. No. Don't stick it in the pail. Give it here."

"It's a burning. Oh it's burning."

"No, here," he said taking her hand.

"Pour water on it! It's killing me."

"No hold still. Let me blow it out."

She stood still, silent, and stunned as he held up her hand and very gently blew on it. He took the dipper from the pail and tenderly held it to her lips. She drank trustingly, and looked down at her hand wondering if he would pour the remainder on her burn when it struck her that she was no longer in pain.

"What'd you do?"

"I blowed it out, I told you," he said nonchalantly. "I do that."

"You blow out fire from burns?"

"Yes, I do that."

"And, you stop bleeding too?"

"Yes, I do that too, and some other things."

She stared into his clear blue eyes in wonder. "You do healing then?" she finally asked.

"I guess that's what you'd call it." Still holding her hand, he tenderly ran his fingers along beside the spot where the painful burn had been. "I don't think this'll even make a place. We got it fast."

He took the hand in both of his and kissed it gently. "You didn't answer me."

"Answer what?" she asked still searching his eyes. He bent down and lightly kissed her lips, then immediately returned with a longer and deeper kiss. She leaned back on the wall beside the table that held the water bucket. Her heart pounded.

"Do you have another beau waiting for you back home?"

She shook her head no and shrugged her shoulders. It occurred to her that she should find out what he meant by asking when he smiled and bent down for another kiss.

"Whoop, here, here now!" Uncle Cabe suddenly appeared in the room.

"Uncle... I" Dovie's mind went blank as her Aunt and cousin came into the room also.

"Your little niece and I have just become engaged, sir," Josiah claimed as he looked expectantly into Dovie's eyes.

"I.. did I?" Dovie stuttered.

"That is, with her father's approval of course... within the year."

*My heavens, he has a quick mind,* she thought. She wondered if she should go along with him, or if she even wanted to go along. She suddenly felt that her answer was yes, but she wasn't about to let him get away with railroading her. She resented him for



announcing an engagement that she didn't agree to, and it struck her that he had kissed her without asking. As she looked at her uncle, she imagined that he must see her as very foolish.

"Uncle Cabe," Dovie spoke slowly and evenly, "Josiah just blew the fire out of this burn, and that's why I let him hold onto my hand. I guess he was just going to ask me if I would like to marry him, and I might allow as to how I'll think about it. It might as well be known that I wouldn't be so silly as to agree to such a thing without thinking long and hard."

She turned toward Josiah, and watched as his eyes darted from her own face to Uncle Cabe's and back. His unexpected suffering both amused and shamed her, so she softened her voice and her expression as she lowered her eyes and added, "If he quits being so bossy, I just might consider him one of these first days." She glanced back at him and saw his panic melt somewhat.

"Well," Josiah said turning to Uncle Cabe, "If you'll allow me to continue visiting, I'll never underestimate this little gal again."

Cabe looked at Dovie and erupted into laughter. "Jane," he called walking toward the kitchen, "you have to hear this."

### Chapter 3 – The Engagement

The spring flowers were already blooming when Dovie came back to town. The countryside was alive with jonquils and dogwood. Blossoms promised a bounty of apples and cherries to come, and green was sweeping across Mortimer and up the mountain. Dovie's heart raced as she saw Josiah coming toward her uncle's house that weekend before Easter. He had come to Steele Creek to see her a couple of times, but it was a long trip even on horseback and once she had agreed to marry him, Josiah was suddenly very busy.

"The sooner I get this house fixed up, the more time we'll have together," he told her. "I'm putting in all the time I can at work so we'll have money, and I'm working on the house all I can."

Josiah and their home together were all that that Dovie dreamed of that winter, she even began thinking about the family they would have together some day. It was easy to admire him and think of him as a hero from a distance, but as they began spending more time together, Dovie was no longer as sure of herself.

Mortimer was lovely that spring, and the fine yellow pollen was there to be cleaned away from almost every surface in Uncle Cabe's yard. Dovie and Josiah were sitting on the porch together when Josiah first sneezed and said "bull shit" at the same time.

"Did you say something?" Dovie asked in disbelief.

"Well, I said bull shit. My granddaddy always said that a sneeze works better if you cuss at the same time. I think it does. It just gets more out, you know." Josiah leaned his chair back against the house as he spoke and shrugged.

"Excuse me?" she said.

"Oh, I'm sorry, excuse me. Aren't you supposed to say God bless you?" he said innocently.

"Excuse me, but are you the same man who sits with me at church, and why would I bless somebody for cussing?" She looked at him sharply as she spoke.

Josiah just laughed at her and said, "Aww little Dove, a little bull shit never hurt nothing. It makes the crops grow better and it clears your head up."

Her father had never used profanity in his life, and she wondered how someone she loved could go against the morals that she had been taught. She was still mad, but she sort of just let it drop.

It was a cloudy Saturday afternoon when she and Louella decided to walk to the store for some salt.

"Is that Josiah?" Louella asked nodding toward the side of the blacksmith shop.

"Where?"

"Over with that group of fellers. Ain't that him with the hat on leaning on the wall?"

Josiah took a drink from a pint jar and passed it over to another man.

"He's drinking liquor, and right out in public too," Dovie said sharply.

"Let's go over and speak," Louella said stepping in the direction of the men.

"Oh no, you come back here. We ain't going over to no bunch of drunk men."

"They're probably not drunk."

"They're drinking."

"Don't you want to see Josiah?"



"Not right now I don't." Dovie took her cousin's arm and pulled her into the store. They stayed in the store until the men had moved away, but later when Josiah came by and found her in the back yard of Jane and Cabe's house, she was ready to confront him.

"I'll tell you one thing Josiah Poarch," she began. "Lips that touch liquor will never touch mine."

"Well Dovie," he said pushing back his hat and scratching his forehead, "I just won't kiss you when I've had a little snort."

"Do you think that's funny?" her voice rose as she rested her hands on her hips.

Josiah's grin faded. "I hoped to get you tickled about it. It ain't no big deal."

Dovie crossed her arms and squinted at him a minute before speaking. "I won't hold with it, Josiah," she said.

"Looky here," Josiah said, "A feller sort of needs a dram every once in a while. I work hard at that lumber camp all week. Then when I'm not here, I'm up home getting our house ready. I need to unwind every once in a while."

"I work hard too, and you don't see me taking a drink," she said.

"Well, little missy, you might as well know that I take a little drink now and then, and I run a still once in a while, but not to sell. So, don't get your dander up."

"You make liquor?" She couldn't believe that he was treating her like she was in the wrong by being concerned about it. She remembered Mary Jane Ivey begging to come home from school with her until her father passed out. She'd seen and heard enough to know that she couldn't live with a drunk.

"I said, I don't make it to sell."

"You make liquor?" She asked again.

"Not all that much, Dovie."

"Let me understand this. You mean to stand there and tell me that you run a still, and you intend to keep it up even though you know that I'm against it?" She thought of Mary Jane again, and the bruises that she tried to hide.

"Well, I just can't make decent medicine with that store bought mess. People count on me to mix up remedies. There's an old doctor up home who retired to the area, and we can call on him if the need comes about, but mostly how we do is how we've done always. I know good and well that you didn't get this far in life without being dosed with a little burned liquor and honey for coughs.'

"That's old timey stuff. We can get patented medicine now," she pointed out although Mama Gaynelle had often mixed up that exact remedy.

"Patented medicine that you get at the store and that you order has some alcohol in it. I bet what I make is a whole lot better for a body."

Dovie tilted her head to the side and gave Josiah a sad look. She imagined what it would be like if he got in trouble with the law. Josiah swallowed hard and looked down at his shoes.

"Running off liquor can be dangerous. What if you get caught?" Dovie said softly.

"I'll just make sure I don't get caught."

"Now that's easier said than done. You know as well as I do that it's dangerous."

"The law don't push it too much up home," Josiah said sitting on the side of the well. "Things ain't like they was when my daddy got killed."

"Your daddy got killed for moonshining?" Her eyes widened.

"I thought sure someone had told you that old story, and I ain't so sure that moonshining was the real reason," he nonchalantly ran his hands back and forth on the rock wall.

"When did all this happen?"

"Way back when I was less than two months old, my Daddy was shot in the back while he was asleep by his still. Grandpa said that it was old Bill Bost that done it. I've known that all my life, but I don't know why he did it. Bill Bost was a sheriff's deputy, but he was from Avery County. He didn't have no business over in Burke."

"And you don't think it was all because of making liquor?" How could he stand there and tell her that his own father was killed at his still, and then think that he was above getting in trouble.

Josiah stood up and pulled her to the well beside him as he continued his story. "Moonshining was illegal then just like it is now, but Bill didn't have no jurisdiction in Burke County. I've heard different tales about it, but the most sensible one is that Bill had made my Daddy mad about something or another, and he was scared of him. I think it was probably just coincidental that my Daddy was killed at his still."

Dovie looked at the ground and didn't speak, so Josiah continued. "I don't know why I opened my big mouth about it at all. I don't reckon this was the right time to bring it up."

"I'm sorry to hear it. It must have been hard for you to know when you was growing up," she said finally.

"I don't reckon... it didn't make too big of a difference."



Dovie was silent again, and both of them sat on the wall of the well for a time.

She thought of the house he was working on, and the dreams that she had. None of her daydreams had ever included Josiah coming home drunk or being arrested.

“Well?” Josiah finally asked.

“Well, what?”

“Well, what are you thinking?” he frowned deeply as he asked.

“I guess I’m thinking about all the things we don’t know about one another. So... what else haven’t you told me Josiah?” she said. “Do I even know who you are?”

“Dovie, there really isn’t much to know. I’ve told you what kind of life I want. You know that I don’t care for anything fancy. I’m a simple man. I know you ain’t been real happy that I’ll be away logging a good bit of the time. I know you don’t like my language sometimes, well fine, but a cuss word or two ain’t gonna hurt nothing.”

*Well just what else that matters to me doesn't matter so much to you?* She thought. *Drinking and cussing ain't a big deal, so just what is a big deal? What do you even care about?* She couldn’t bring herself to put her thoughts into words. She felt like screaming and running.

When she didn’t speak, he finally continued. “Honey, I understand that you don’t like my moonshining, but it’s sort of necessary. Do you want me to change everything about myself? Josiah paused again, but still Dovie did not speak. “Well, damn it, I am who I am.”

Dovie still didn’t speak. She couldn’t speak. She wanted a life with Josiah, but she didn’t even know what she was getting into by marrying him. She held her head

down so that he couldn't see her tears, and even if she had found the words, she doubted that they would pass the lump in her throat.

Josiah got up and walked toward the house then he turned and strode back toward Dovie. He bent down to look at her face. She tried to pull away, not wanting him to see, but he took both of her hands.

*Big dumb brute*, she thought. She considered stomping his foot and running away.

Josiah sighed and continued, "It breaks my heart to see you there with tears in those big blue eyes, but I'm just a man, and I'm not going to be perfect. I love you, and I'll do my best, but there are certain things that I ain't about to change." Josiah dropped her hands and kissed her bonnet after another pause and said, "You might better go on in the house and think about it."

Dovie straightened up, blew her nose on the handkerchief from her pocket, and finally said, "I reckon..." but she couldn't finish her sentence.

How could she bear to throw away her dreams? She realized that she had only thought of window boxes and watching their little children play. She had not thought about the arguments they would have, or the hard times when she might have to try and patch together little clothes to fit growing bodies. She had not wondered how he would react when the crops were bad and the dinner burned.

Josiah watched her walk away then as she was almost to the door he called out, "Dovie!"

Dovie turned around and held her head to one side as she waited for him to speak.

"Where does that leave us, girl?" he said. "You think about it and then you tell me what will happen with us."

She just wheeled around and walked away. Once inside she closed the door and looked back out through the crack. He went back and sat on the well for a long time, and then he turned and stood looking down the well for even longer. Finally he rubbed his eyes and walked away. Dovie felt the urge to run after him, but she wouldn't give in. She couldn't give in until she knew all that was in her heart.

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Dovie didn't want to lose Josiah, and that she was sure of. At the same time, she didn't want to walk into a marriage that had problems before it even started. If a man would drink and cuss and quarrel before marriage, what was to be expected after the vows were said and she was trapped?

She thought about Mary Jane again. She hadn't been surprised when she overheard her father and Gaynelle talking about how Mary Jane's father drank and beat her mother. She wasn't surprised when Mary Jane ran off with some boy they didn't know and never returned.

She'd noticed bad marriages. Her own Uncle Paul and his wife, Effie, hardly spoke a civil word to one another. She had heard Effie telling something to Gaynelle about liquor and a woman, but she knew that Gaynelle would not tell her Effie and Paul's business.

Her grandparents seemed to get along pretty well in spite of the hard life they'd shared. Her father and Gaynelle seemed happy, but then her own mother had died in



child birth. She wondered if any marriage at all was worth the risk of what might happen.

She didn't expect to see Josiah for at least a week. She thought he had already left for the lumber camp when he knocked on the front door and asked her to come out and talk with him. They stood on the porch for a few minutes before Josiah spoke. He sat on the porch rail and ran his hands through his blonde hair. When he finally spoke, it wasn't to argue.

"Dovie, what do you think our life will be like?" he asked softly.

"Well..." she began uncertainly, "I thought we'd move to the house you're getting ready, and start a little farm. Maybe have a couple of children one day, and live a simple, Godly life."

"Just because I cuss a bit don't mean that the good Lord ain't important. I go to church. I do intend to put in a crop, but I don't intend to quit logging. I want more for my family than to work all summer and starve all winter if the weather don't cooperate. I went to school all three months every year from the time I was six up until I turned sixteen and got too big, and I mean for every youngun of mine to finish every year available. I want a good life, and I mean for you to be part of it if you want to. Do you still want to?" He waited for her answer.

Dovie hung her head. She had only made it through the fifth reader when she was needed to stay home and help with the smaller children. She had told this to Josiah, but she hadn't known that education was so very important to him.

"What do you want to do?" he persisted, but she remained silent.

She tried to picture their life together and all she could see was Josiah cussing as he came home from the logging camp to house full of children who thought they were better than her because of their fine education. She pictured the still unknown neighbors laughing as they were kicked out of church, and the federal revenue agents taking Josiah away.

Josiah studied her intently, and sat down on the chopping block. "Well?" He persisted.

"Well, nothing," she answered.

"I guess you've still got some thinking to do," he said.

"I reckon I have at that," she said.

"Do we have to keep talking and keep talking?"

"Do you want to keep talking?"

"I don't want to give up. You think it over, and I'll be around here tomorrow evening."

"Don't you have to get to work?"

"There ain't no use in me going to work, when I don't know about my life," he said and walked away.

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Now she watched the meadow from the bedroom window by turns anxious to see him cutting across that field and worried about what she could say. She could not picture a life with Josiah, nor did she want to picture her life without him. More than imagining her future, she remembered his hearty laugh at a good story, and the way his strong arms moved as he effortlessly chopped piles of kindling. She loved the way his gray eyes

sparkled when she walked into a room and his courtly manner when he opened the door for her. She loved his kindness and generosity, and she loved him. Faults and all, she adored Josiah.

He had never pretended to be anyone but who he was. He had never been less than honest with her.

*Maybe it's better to know that you're getting someone who ain't perfect than to find out later that you're stuck with some pure old devil,* she thought.

Dovie nervously went about her business for the rest of the day, often running to a window to watch for Josiah again, but he didn't come until the evening just as he said he would. She was washing supper dishes, and saw him walking across the field behind the house. She didn't wait, but dried her hands, and went out to meet him in the back yard.

"I have a few things to say to you if you will hear them," he began.

"Go ahead," she answered, not wanting to speak first anyway.

"I do not plan to change everything about myself, but I promise never to raise my hand to you in anger and never to cause you humiliation. I'll be as honest and hardworking as I know how to be, and I will try to watch my language around you and be respectful. You must know that I intend to do whatever it takes to provide well for my family, and if that means I need to be gone some, that's what I'll do. I mean to do a lot for the community and the church and for you, but I can't promise to become someone I ain't, Dovie. That's just the way it is.

"I...", she began.

"No, don't say a thing now. I want you to think about what I just said."

"How long do I need to go about thinking?"



"I don't know. You're a grown woman Dovie, and I wouldn't tell you what to think or how long."

"I appreciate that, Josiah."

"Well, I reckon old Bart's finished shoeing my horse. I've gotta go on down and get it, but do you think we can talk again when I get back?"

"Why, yes."

"Then I'll be back," he said and started down the road. He had gotten as far as the front door when he turned around and called."

"Hey Dovie, what was that last thing you said?"

"You mean, yes?"

"Why don't you just keep saying that?" he said and laughed as he walked away.

Dovie smiled. Josiah had an exasperating way of making her cheerful when she meant to be mad at him. She had been so serious during this time that it was good to just give way to happiness.

Dovie went back into the kitchen and rinsed the dishes. Uncle Cabe was weaving a new chair bottom with twine and Louella was holding it for him when Dovie walked into the parlor. Aunt Jane had gone to a neighbor's house.

"Uncle Cabe, I need a little advice," she said. "If a fella drinks and cusses before he gets married, do you reckon he'll do worse things after he's married?"

"That depends on the fella," said Uncle Cabe.

"And if he argues and carries on 'til you just feel like knocking a knot on his head, do you reckon that's what he'll always do?" she continued.

"What's Josiah done now?" Louella asked.

"If you're asking if Josiah will get ornerier or if he'll grow up a little, I can't much answer you. What I can do though is tell you a little tale of a couple of fellers I knew up on the mountain," Cabe said. "There were these two fellers that were courting these two real pretty girls. After the fellows took the girls home one night, they went over toward Linville Falls where there was a tavern set up along side of the road. The two boys got pretty drunk, and the tavern keeper said that they ought to go on home and sleep it off. The fellows should have gone on home before dark, and they should have asked if they could stay, but instead they took the tavern keeper and threw him out the door and locked it."

"My goodness..." said Louella.

"That was a pretty rough trick, and they got in all sorts of trouble. They were banned from the tavern, they were churched, and the girl's parents said they couldn't see their daughters again. They were sisters, you know."

"And the boys were brothers weren't they?" Dovie asked suspiciously.

"That's horrible... Did they ever get forgiven by everybody?" asked Louella.

"Hey, you're talking about you and Daddy ain't you? Mama and Aunt Jane are sisters," Dovie said.

"You're a pretty smart girl. I guess you'll come up with the right answer."

"You and Daddy turned out just fine."

"Many a man's been saved by the love of a good woman. Just remember that, Dovie."

Dovie went out onto the porch, and watched for Josiah's return. She was nervous about what he would say when he returned. She ran little speeches through her own mind. Some began with a severe laying down of the law, and some were lighthearted.

When he finally came, he walked up to her and began a speech that sounded rehearsed.

"I'm pretty poor, but I'm hard working. I ain't perfect, but I try my best."

"I respect that, Josiah."

"Well then, will you marry me?"

"I said I would, didn't I?"

"Even if I ain't perfect?"

She was smiling now. "I'll marry you as long as you don't sneeze in church."

He had relaxed and took her hand as he spoke. "I promise that I'll refrain from fertilizing the congregation."

"That's all I want."

"And Dovie," he became serious again as he took her other hand "I will never bring liquor into our house, and I'll never come home drunk."

"I'd rather you not get drunk, but I'd rather you come home a little drunk than to worry the life out of me." She thought few seconds then decided to tease him, "You're not one of those fellows that comes home trying to pick a fight are you?"

"If I need to pick a fight, I'll go out and find a bull to wrestle. Then I'll come home and keep my mouth shut," he promised.

"Oh, I think you're full of bull," she said laughing.



"I never said I wasn't," he agreed "and that's a fact."



## Chapter 4 Dovie's marriage August 1898

They slipped off to the town of Kawanii in Avery County to get married, so they could avoid the embarrassment of a shiveree. It was early when they said their vows, so they decided to travel on to Burke County and their new home in Jonas Ridge. Their plan was to try to avoid running into anyone, but it was not to be. When they reached the house, there was a whole wedding party waiting.

Dovie's family from Steele Creek was there, and would spend the night with Josiah's mother and stepfather before returning. Aunt Jane, Uncle Cabe, and Luella would stay with Josiah's grandparents. Even Josiah's best friend from the lumber camps, Jacob came for the big event and brought his gear to camp out on the creek for a few days.

Mama Gaynelle, Aunt Jane, and Louella helped Dovie put away her few possessions in the sturdy log house. It was two stories, with one room on each level, and stairs that ran up the outside of the house. As she carried in her basket of yarn, Dovie stopped to run her hand across a hand hewn board by the outside of the door. The ax marks were worn smooth by time and weather. Great care and precision had gone into this work. Each board was about three feet wide and six inches thick, and white clay from the surrounding hills had been used to fill in between. Dovie sighed as she touched the heavy door. It looked tight and secure. It was hard for her to imagine that this fine cabin would be her home.

Dovie's new in-laws had cleaned the house, placed fresh linen on the beds, and even left a vase of fresh flowers on the table. The big room downstairs was divided into sort of a sleeping and sitting area on one side and the kitchen on the other. There was a

rocker and a straight chair by the hearth, and a good bed in the corner. Dovie placed her basket under a small table in the corner. The table held a Holy Bible and a kerosene lamp, and Dovie made a note to ask Josiah if it was all right for her to keep her needle work there.

She went back to the wagon and got a big quilt and carried it up the stairs to the second level of the house. The upstairs held two big beds, a chair, and a homemade dresser. A huge steamer trunk was pushed against the wall, and Dovie wondered if she should put the quilt inside or if this trunk was only for Josiah's things. She stood for a moment and laid the quilt on top of the trunk, and wondered if the time would ever come when she didn't feel the need to ask Josiah where she should keep things.

"Where do you want this?" Josiah asked as he carried her small trunk into the room.

Dovie felt her heart flip and her stomach tighten. She realized that she hadn't answered, "anywhere, wherever..." she said as she looked around the room.

"Put it over by yourn," Dovie's new mother-in-law, Suda, said as she entered the room behind Josiah. "Them drawers over there is empty and cleaned out for you."

Josiah winked at Dovie as he gently sat the trunk down and left the room.

Opening the drawers, Dovie saw that they had been lined with pages from the Sears, Roebuck, and Company catalog. Someone in Josiah's family had chosen pages filled with fine women's wear to protect Dovie's clothing and personal items.

Dovie did not know what to say to this woman who was now part of her own family, but luckily Suda relieved her of the task. As she opened Dovie's trunk and handed her items to put away, Suda gave her a bit of the history of the house.



"It was built beside Camp Creek just after the Civil War, and then it came down to Josiah's Daddy," she said "The neighbors pitched in to help move it up here."

"My goodness, this is a big sturdy house," said Dovie. "How on earth did they move it?"

"On logs," Josiah's mother answered. "They put logs under it and just pushed it along. You wouldn't think it would work, but it does. When one log rolls out the back, the men take it and move it to the front again. It's hard, but this is a better place for it."

"It sure is a pretty home place," Dovie agreed.

"I'm glad that you like it, and I really hope that you and Josiah will be happy here. When you get through unpacking, I'll get Sara Jane to show you all around," said Suda.

Dovie tried to remember which of Josiah's younger sisters Sara Jane was.

Dovie's clothing fit easily into the top three of the four drawers. After placing the last nightgown into the third drawer, she opened the fourth drawer just to look inside. The catalog pages there featured fancy cradles and other baby items. Dovie gently closed the drawer and was suddenly embarrassed as she noticed that Suda was smiling.

"Oh, Sarie!" Suda yelled out the open window causing Dovie to jump. "Sara Jane get up here."

Sara Jane bounded up the steps, her bare feet thudding on the wooden stairs.

Dovie noticed that Josiah's eight-year-old sister didn't look very much like Josiah or his mother. Her light brown hair curled where Suda's dark hair was smooth and pulled back in a bun. Her face was round and freckled, whereas both Josiah and his mother had oval faces with high cheekbones. She had not seen Sara's father nor her other older brother as

yet, and she wondered what they looked like and how she would get along with this family of strangers.

At Suda's request, Sara lead Dovie down the stairs and to the front of the house. She couldn't see Josiah anywhere around.

"This here's your smoke house," Sara said as she motioned toward a building made of newer and smoother boards. "Josiah built this mostly by hisself. He even laid all those rocks for the foundation."

Sara pushed open the door, and Dovie noticed the saws and hammers still on the floor of the building. They closed the door and walked around the side where the ground sloped causing the back of the building to be much higher than the front. Turning the corner to the back, Sara pushed open a door in the building's rock foundation to reveal a cellar lined with shelves.

"We canned y'all up some of everything we put up so far this year," Suda explained pointing to the back shelf. "We got you that crock for making sour kraut, and there's a few taters to do you 'till you dig yourn."

"There's a garden already?" Dovie asked.

"Law, yes, Josiah had our brother, Pierce, help him plant a big, pretty old garden. Didn't you see it when you rode in?"

"Naw, Josiah had me cover my eyes until we got up to the house for a surprise."

"What a big old Romeo."

"Who's Romeo?"

"He's a feller in a Shakespeare story. It's a love tale; have Josiah tell it to you sometime. Josiah knows all kinds of stories. He used to hide and read all the time. He

can quote more scripture than the preacher, but don't get it in your head that he'll ever be any preacher. He just ain't got that in him, but he's a pretty good feller when he ain't picking on me."

Dovie nodded absently and ran her hands along the tight rock work before closing the door behind them. She had thought of marrying a preacher when she was a little girl. Maybe one of her children would go into the ministry one day.

"And down here's the best spring you ever drank out of," Sara said as they walked a little further down the hill behind the smoke house. Behind a clump of mountain laurel was the source of the stream that Dovie noticed earlier as they walked down the hill. The still water seeped right out of the U shaped rock, and Josiah had used the bank behind the rock to construct a roof over the spring. The spring was over two feet deep just under the shed, and rose sharply where it flowed into the rapid moving little stream.

"Lookey there," Sara said as she pointed to a little green lizard. "Now there's a good sight."

Dovie knew that the lizard's presence was indication that the water was pure for drinking.

"In the winter it looks like steam is rising off the water, but it's icy cold winter and summer," Dovie's new sister-in-law said.

The new bride and the young girl wandered around the house looking at the new hog pen, the garden, and the outhouse. Sara Jane showed Dovie where the blackberry briars were; then they picked tart juicy apples on their way back around the house. They



looked at a variety of apple trees, pear trees, plum trees, and peach trees. Sara showed Dovie where she would find sarvis berries and blueberries.

“Josiah’s Daddy, not our Paw, but his real father, planted a bunch of these trees,” Sara told her.

“I feel like I’m in the Garden of Eden here,” Dovie said, looking about her.

“It might be the paradise, but you still have to live with Josiah,” Sara said, laughing at her own joke. She turned and pointed toward a big building at the top of a sloping field. “Up there by the barn is a big old cherry tree. Look up yonder, there’s Josiah coming out of the barn.”

Dovie shielded her eyes from the sun, and watched as her new husband waved and walked through the field toward them.

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For the party Dovie put back on her wedding clothes, a dark blue skirt and a white lacy blouse that had been made and sent to her by her sister, Ida. The men set up tables of boards laid out on saw horses. Family and neighbors brought food just like it was Decoration Day, and a few people brought instruments. Even Josiah played a song or two on his fiddle, but he mostly stayed by Dovie’s side.

Dovie feared the sort of shivaree that had been thrown in her community, a loud, increasingly rowdy party with the boys and men doing all they could to irritate the newlyweds. She could imagine a long and embarrassing ordeal, but it was not to be. Just before the sun made its rapid decent below the mountain horizon, the company was gone. Josiah’s mother had threatened to “wale the tar” out of any man who dared stay, and

evidently she was a force to be reckoned with. The newlyweds sat on the porch talking until the air began to chill, then went in and Josiah lit the lantern.

"Here," he said, pulling the big rocker in front of the hearth. "We could use another rocker." He ran his fingers through his hair and looked around the room. He pulled some kindling out of the wood box, neatly stacked the firewood in the hearth, and started the fire. Then he took the clock key from the mantle and wound it up.

"Just sit here and stay warm," he said, as the blaze timidly caught the wood, then he walked out the back door.

Dovie watched the flames grow, when suddenly a spark caught an abandoned spider web that spanned the top half of the back of the fireplace. It took just an instant for the spark to spread across the web's intricate pattern then disappear. Dovie caught her breath, elated that she had seen this brief, beautiful accident, and then sad that she might never see that stunning sight again. She sighed as Josiah reentered carrying a big quilt. He clumsily wrapped it around her and bent to kiss her cheek.

"Dovie, this ain't no big fancy house, but good and sturdy, and we can make it better. My grandpaw built it out of good strong chestnut boards."

"It's a fine place... It's right fine," she answered softly.

The fire grew and chased the chill from the room as he stood quietly with his big hands on her shoulder. She glanced at the bed in the corner and then at the fire. A vague apprehension made her tense up. Josiah pulled the straight chair closer and sat by her side taking hold of her hand. He pulled her fingers to his lips kissed them gently, and stared absently into the fire. She squeezed his hand gently and relaxed.

She was still a little nervous about this new and exciting life, but this was the man that she loved and she knew that she would love him all their days. The light from the fire and the lamp flickered on the walls of the dim room, and Dovie looked around at the few furnishings. It felt right and good to be here with him.

She wondered how many couples had started their lives here. How many children had been born within these walls, and how many old people had found their way out of the world here. There would be plenty of time to ask later. Dovie was home.



## Chapter 5 – Dovie's visitors (September 1899)

"Hold it." The picture man flashed his massive camera, and Dovie tried to blink away the spots from her eyes. No wonder little Katherine had cried so pitifully when her picture had been taken. Dovie's family had come to visit from Colorado, and they had paid the picture man to come all the way up from Morganton. The twenty-seven-mile trip up the mountain took a full day, so the man planned to stay with Josiah's parents and hoped to make additional money by taking more photographs in the area.

Dovie had been dressed up in new finery by her older sisters and was sitting beside her younger sister, Cora, on a bench in front of a backdrop placed out in the yard. Seventeen now, Cora had grown into a proper young woman. She was practically a stranger to Dovie who wondered at the girl's stylish clothing and unfamiliar manner of speaking. Cora was a bit reserved, but she took to baby Katherine immediately. Everything the four-month-old baby did was a delight to her young aunt.

Josiah had traveled to meet the train in Morganton, and had come up the mountain with his in-laws and the picture man the following day. Dovie would not have known her relatives if she had met them on the street. The women were elegant, but dusty in their tailored outfits and large, stylish hats. Luther wore a suit and a little bowler, and sat on the buckboard beside of Josiah. Josiah had padded a seating area in front of their trunks with blankets and straw, but the travelers were stiff and sore from their journey. Dovie quickly pulled off her apron and wished that she had put shoes on before coming out of the house.

It was nearly dark when they arrived, and Dovie had supper almost ready. The travelers were too tired to eat much, and eager to clean up and rest. Victoria and Luther were in one of the upstairs beds, and Ida and Cora were in the other.

It was the next morning before Dovie could do much catching up with her sisters. Dovie's own family had increased. Baby Katherine had not even waited until her parents had been married a full year. They had married on the first day of August in 1898, and Katherine had come into the world on May 29<sup>th</sup> in 1899.

Cora had just completed her education at Grand Junction's splendid new high school and was planning to become a teacher. She had grown into a stout little woman, with glorious chestnut-colored hair and a fine creamy complexion. She was just a bit shorter than Dovie's four feet ten inches, but Dovie did not feel that this young woman was the same little sister who had left her in Steele Creek many years ago. The two were cordial, but distant.

Dovie thought that she may have recognized Victoria and Ida by their eyes if she had been given time to study Victoria's gray/green eyes and Ida's brown and green ones. They were both sweet faced ladies now in their thirties. Both had the same dark brown hair of their youth, but now a strand of gray appeared here and there. Victoria and Luther had two teenaged boys who were staying with Luther's brother Bart and his wife Etta back in Grand Junction. At first Luther had worked with Bart, but now he had his own successful store. Ida had married a man named Bill Wilton shortly after she settled in her new town, but the two had no children.

These relatives had come to see Dovie's baby and to visit with the home folks while they were there. Not long after their arrival, Dovie began wondering if their real

purpose was to talk her and Josiah into moving to Colorado to be near them. Luther talked on and on about the growing economy of the Grand Junction area. To hear her brother-in-law tell it, their town was full of fine carriages and elegant homes. Victoria and Ida even had telephones in their houses, an oddity that Dovie had heard now existed in Morganton.

One of the first pushes for the move came just after the travelers discovered that the young couple's outhouse was sixty yards from the house and across the road.

"I can't believe that you have to walk all that way anytime you need to use the outhouse," Victoria said.

Ida laughed and said, "Why, Vic. Didn't you get citified? You used an outhouse most of your life."

"Where's your outhouse?" Dovie asked in confusion.

Ida replied, "Why honey, we have indoor plumbing. We go right in the house. After the town put in its waterworks, Luther was one of the first to bring water and all into the house, and Bill wasn't far behind."

"You go right in the house. Ain't that nasty?" Dovie couldn't believe their lives were so different from hers. It made them seem even more like strangers.

"No, heavens, child," Victoria said. "Water comes into the house, and we pull a chain to wash everything away. Water comes right into the kitchen too, so we don't have to carry it anymore."

"It just don't sound right to me," Dovie furrowed her brow as she spoke. She just couldn't imagine how it all worked and that it could be safe.



"You'd like living in town, Dovie," Ida began her pitch. "We have electricity now and steam radiator heat. We have a streetcar that the horse pulls along a track and takes you where you want to go. We have a big new train station and a high school and elementary school. Little Katherine would grow up with a real good education."

"It sounds like a real nice place. Did you stop by Mama and Daddy's when you came up?" Dovie was tired of hearing about their town.

"No, we'll stay a couple of days with Daddy and Gaynelle when we head home," Victoria said frowning. "You know, I've never met that woman."

"You'll like her. She treated me as good as gold when I was a little girl," Dovie said.

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That night after the guests went to bed, Dovie talked with Josiah as she nursed Katherine.

"To hear them talk you'd think the streets of Grand Junction were paved with gold." Dovie emphasized the word "Grand."

"I don't know. Moving to Colorado may not be such a bad idea."

"Surely you're not expecting me to take this little baby and move clear across the country."

"I didn't say that. I've just been talking to Luther."

"We'd never see family except them."

"Maybe they're lonesome for family."

"Then let them move home."

"They've built new schools from the primary grades on up."

“We have schools, and I’m sure we’ll have better schools before Katherine is old enough.”

“She needs a really good school if she’s going to be a teacher.”

“She’s barely four months old.”

“And she’ll be grown before you know it.”

“What about all of those academies and women’s colleges you’re always trying to find out about?”

“You’ve been known to say that you don’t want her to go away from home.”

“We don’t know what will be around here by the time she needs it.” Dovie patted Katherine’s soft, fine hair lovingly with her free hand then kissed the tiny head.

“Wouldn’t you like to have electricity and a telephone?”

“We don’t need them now.”

“How do you know we don’t need them? It would be nice to have a coal-fired furnace with radiators. And with a telephone you could talk with your neighbors anytime you want to.”

“If I’m too lazy to get up and go visiting, I don’t need to talk to them.”

“Don’t be so closed minded, Dovie.” Josiah leaned forward resting his hands on his thighs.

“Don’t be so all fired ready to move.”

“I didn’t say we were moving. I’d just like to think about it.”

Dovie shifted Katherine to her other breast and settled back in the rocker. She watched her daughter with tears in her eyes.

“Josiah, I decided long ago that I didn’t want to leave.”

"I know that. You were still a girl when you decided not to go. You had Pokey then. Now you have Kit Kat here, and maybe she should have the better things in life."

"What all does she need, Josiah? She has love and a home. The rest will come."

"I told you I wanted more for my family. It can't be wrong of me to want to see the two of you have the best of everything."

"And that's why you work for the lumber company. You go off to make more money so we'll have things, but we don't have you enough as it is. Sammy has been real good about helping out when you're away, but if we moved I wouldn't even have him. All you think about is making money, and all I need is my family."

"That's your family upstairs too."

"Mama and Papa are the family I really know, and what about Suda and all of them."

"We could help them out too."

"They're living just fine."

"I'm just thinking about it, girl. Is it so wrong for me to think about it?"

"Thinking ain't doing. Think all you want to, but remember me while you're at it."

Dovie went on to bed as quickly as she could get Katherine down, but sleep was a long time in coming.

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Over the next two weeks, Dovie felt as though she were watching a runaway wagon heading toward a cliff. Matters became worse when Luther discovered that Josiah worked on the lumber company's train crew. There were long discussions of the



innovations in lumbering. Josiah described the early splash dam systems and the old tram roads. They talked on and on about how much better the new gear-driven wood-burning trains are than the old incline railroads with their stationary steam engines.

As she listened, Dovie felt complete hopelessness. Sometimes she imagined swatting Josiah right on the ear, or kicking his shins.

"They only go around twelve miles in an hour, but logs ain't gonna rot, so what's the hurry?" Josiah explained. "I'd sooner take my time than bury drowned men. Splash dams and fast rivers are hell on a crew."

"Well, that's true," Luther nodded leaning back in the rocking chair.

"We build these new railroads right into the forest, so instead of just looking for the best lumber we can come in and pretty much clear out a whole section. It ain't pretty when we leave, but I figure it'll all grow back in time. You know, nature has a way of taking things back eventually. It just might take a while."

All this time Victoria and Ida sat at the table sewing while Cora sat with them and read. In her slightly flared blue skirt and jaunty square-collared white blouse, she looked the very picture of a proper young schoolteacher. Dovie leaned against the wall and watched her younger sister as she sat on the bed beside Josiah. She could imagine Cora on a sofa in the fine parlor that Ida had described to her.

"I guess you have a pretty stable job, Josiah. If you get tired of being on the lumber train crew, you can move on to one of the railroads," Luther said.

Josiah crossed his hands on the top of his head and leaned back before speaking. "That's true, but I've heard that some railroads are bringing in a lot of outsiders to have enough people."

"Outsiders?"

"Italian, Irish, Cherokee..." Josiah straightened up again.

Dovie wanted to point out that both his family and hers had Indian ancestors, but she didn't interrupt.

"You know, the Denver Rio Grande pays real well," Luther continued.

"Really?"

"I don't know how much, but I can find out for you."

"They wouldn't hire just some old feller from the mountains of North Carolina to work for them.

"Oh, we have mountains to negotiate too, and they could probably use a skilled man like yourself. If you were established... I mean if you would come out and stay with us for a while and talk with them. Bart knows some big wheels with the company, and I'm sure you could get on."

Just then Cora got up and picked up the last biscuit left over from supper.

"Oh no, miss. Put that back down." Victoria said sternly. "If you eat the last biscuit, you'll never get married."

"Here we go again. If I eat the last biscuit, I won't get married. If someone sweeps under my feet, I'll be an old maid. Superstition... just superstition," Cora complained.

"Don't be in such a hurry for Cora to get married," Josiah said. "This little gal's trained for a school teacher." Dovie imagined herself at the front of a schoolroom.

"She'll want to marry someday, Josiah," Victoria said. "Ida, walk outside with me before it gets darker."

"I could use a little walk," Ida stood up and stretched.

"Well, hurry on before it's too dark to see the spiders in the outhouse," Luther said, pulling his tobacco from his pocket.

"Oh, Luther," Victoria said as she had every evening when Luther gave some version of the same idea.

"Josiah, let's go out and smoke a little bit," Luther suggested.

Dovie frowned as Josiah got up to follow Luther. She knew why they were going out. Katherine whined and Dovie turned to get her hungry daughter.

"Dovie, does it hurt?" Cora had taken Josiah's chair beside the bed.

Dovie settled Katherine onto her breast and looked up at her younger sister's wide, green eyes. Did it hurt that Luther was trying to talk Josiah into moving his family to Colorado? Did it hurt that her sisters had left her behind when she was a little girl and taken Cora? Did it hurt that she barely knew her own sisters anymore?

The younger girl took a breath for courage and asked, "Does it hurt very much to have a baby? I mean... I've been wondering."

"What did Ida and Vick tell you?"

"They haven't told me anything. They didn't even tell me about the pip until I started bleeding, and it scared me out of my wits."

"Well, that's not the right way to raise a girl. You don't need to know everything in the world at once, but they need to let you know what to expect with being a woman."

"Well, does it hurt much? I've wondered about that for a long time, and I really don't have anyone to tell me."



"The old women told me that I would forget the pain when I held the baby, but I don't think that's completely right. I'll tell you the truth. I thought I was ripping plumb in half, but I'd do it all over again for Katherine." Dovie tenderly ran her forefinger across the tiny fingers holding onto her open shirt. "Did they tell you how babies get here?"

"Not really... sort of. I was sent away when Victoria had her boys. My friend Martha told me, and I didn't believe her, but she slipped one of her Daddy's medical books up to her room and showed me pictures and explained it. It all sounds pretty disgusting."

"The part about having babies, or the man part?"

"All of it."

"Honey, it's all part of God's plan. When you find the right man, and when you bring your precious child into the world, you'll see what I mean. The right man makes all the difference."

"And, what if I never find the right one?"

"You probably will, and if you don't you'll always get an extra biscuit."

Cora smiled widely. "I'd rather have one of your biscuits than a man with a mustache."

"Josiah lets his beard grow in the winter sometimes."

"Is it awful?"

"Not as bad as giving birth. But to tell you the truth, I never minded a little brush on the way to a picnic."

Cora burst out laughing then covered her mouth as she noticed that Katherine had fallen to sleep. Dovie put the baby gently on the bed and placed a pillow beside of her to insure that Katherine would not roll off.

"Well, you'd think I was too stupid to handle any of the facts of life the way Victoria and Ida shelter me. You're sort of lucky they didn't take you along," Cora stopped rocking. "I wish they had taken you along too, and then I'd have a sister near my age to talk with. If they could take only one... I... I wish they had taken you instead of me."

"Was it that bad?" Dovie's eyes widened.

"No, it wasn't bad. It's just that... well, I've always felt sort of guilty that they took me and not you. I got most of the pretty clothes. I went to the best schools. I lived in a nice house, and I was the pet. I didn't deserve any more than you," Cora brushed a tear from her cheek as she spoke.

"It wasn't your fault, Cora."

"Well, I feel like it was. If I were never born, they would have taken you."

"Don't say that. You were put on this earth for a purpose, and I imagine I was left behind for a purpose."

"You were left because Victoria and Ida didn't want to take us both on at once. That's probably the reason and the purpose, and I don't think it's right."

"Now wait a minute. What if I tell you that you're the one who lost out?"

"What do you mean?" Cora straightened in the chair.

"I had Papa and these beautiful mountains. If you knew Papa very well, you'd know that he's funny and that he knows all sorts of things. You missed out on Mama Gaynelle and the kids."

"You're right about Papa. All the other kids in school talked about their Mama and Papa, and I didn't know either of mine. Having two aunts and two uncles raise me was a little confusing too. I started out with Victoria and Luther and Ida. Then later Ida married Bill, and when Victoria's first baby was on the way, I was sort of shifted over to Bill and Ida's. I was never asked where I wanted to live any more than you were, but at least you knew that you would always be with the same people." Cora ran her thumb down a seam of her skirt and looked up again. "Maybe you knew that you were always wanted too, but I never knew it for sure."

"Why sure they wanted you. Who wouldn't? You're a sweet girl."

"I'm glad you think so. Do you think you can forgive me for being the one taken along?"

"You don't need to think that way. Why law have mercy, if I were taken to Colorado I wouldn't have met Josiah. I wouldn't have little Kit Kat. I'd have missed knowing Pokie. Girl, they did me a favor."

Cora smiled as she looked over at the sleeping baby. "I guess they did. You're here in this garden of Eden..."

"Garden of Eden?" Dovie sounded surprised even though she had said the same thing just a year ago. Maybe her sister was a bit like her.

"You have apples, cherries, figs, all kinds of fruits and berries. There's that big old garden, and cows and chickens."



"Yeah, and all the work that goes with keeping them up."

"This is a wonderful place, Dovie. I'll be happy to think of you here."

From that time on, Cora and Dovie spent most of their time together. Dovie taught Cora many of her best recipes, and the two walked and talked together as often as possible. Cora still didn't feel like a sister to Dovie, but they did become friends. Josiah and Luther never mentioned the possibility of moving again, and the remainder of the visit was pleasant. Dovie felt reconnected with her sisters, and some of the pain of being left behind began to fade as they talked about that time in their lives.

The sisters parted with wet eyes, and when Cora held Katherine for the last time she cried bitterly.

"Colorado is too far away," Cora said after she kissed the baby's pudgy cheek.

"Yes, it's just too far," Dovie agreed with a glance at Josiah.

"Don't forget Aunt Cora," the girl said handing the child back to her mother.

Cora was the last to get into the wagon.

"Y'all be careful. Write as soon as you get home. Come see us again real soon."

Dovie wiped at her own tears.

When the others had added their pleasantries and the wagon began moving Cora turned one more time.

"Bye, Josiah. Bye, Katty. Bye, Dovie. I love you. Come see us," she called.

Dovie stood still and breathless for a moment then smiled and waved vigorously standing on her tiptoes to see the wagon as far as she could. Cora had only been two. She could not possibly know that she had said those words before.

## Chapter 6      Dovie

May 1 1902

*Dear Josiah*

*I rite this letter to you to let you know that me and the younguns is fine. It has been hard without you but we're doing ok. Little Tom is growin lak a pig and Katherine ast me the other day what you look lak. She says she wants to make sure she remembers. Shes gittin to be a real handful and keeps me runnin. Katherine likes to sleep with me and the baby all of the time. I reckon that is all rite but she kicks lak a mule. She says that Tom can sleep in the trundle bed when he gits big so she can sleep with me always. I try to git her in her bed ever nite. She don't have any idey why baby Tom cant sleep in it. It's gonna take a lot of doing to get her into her own bed when you come back.*

*Wilbur has been a right smart of help around the place. I'm glad Mama and Papa let him come stay with me. Back durin the snows of March he kept the path to the outhouse shoveled. Mercy you should of seen it. It commenced to snowin rite after you left and lak to never let up. I guess I told you all that but I fergot to tell you what help Wilbur is. Pierce came to plow and now me and Wilbur will plant. Im skerd it might still frost but we can go ahead with taters and turnips. We wuz supposed to get them in on Good Friday, but I didn't want to take the younguns out in such cold. Itll take Wilbur and me and I don't have nobody else to watch them.*

*The money you sent came in real handy. We got purty low on cofey and stuff but we got the money and now its fine. Pierce said it was late on account of big floods on the Mississippi.*

*Josiah I hope you can come see us purty soon. I know it will be a long time before we can come live with you.*

Dovie stopped writing and wiped a tear from the page. She would probably have to recopy the letter, but she wanted to make it better anyway. She looked back over her writing and smiled proudly when she came to the word Mississippi. It was a hard word to spell, but she still remembered the little saying from childhood – M, I, crooked letter, crooked letter, I, crooked letter, crooked letter, I, hump back, hump back, I.

*“I’ll get Kathleen to help me write this again,”* she thought. She always hated to let anyone see her simple way of writing and spelling, so she got her neighbor and friend, Kathleen, to help. Josiah never made fun of her for her notes, but she still wanted to impress her husband. She took the letter and, folding it carefully, placed it in the cigar box on the mantle along with the pencil. The week’s mail wouldn’t get carried to Morganton until Thursday anyway. Three of the Barrier boys took turns taking it down on horseback, and usually came back with mail from outside on Friday or Saturday.

Dovie thought of the long distance between home and Colorado. He had stopped talking about going away a short time after his in-laws left, but Josiah had never given up on his plan to go away and work in Colorado. The dry summer of 1901 had contributed to a poor crop yield, and forest fires around the lumber camp made for a bad year financially. Josiah had decided that working for the railroads in the Rocky Mountains would be his key to an easy life for his family, and they began arguing about money and moving. Dovie finally got tired of scrimping on the things they needed and of fighting with her husband, so after a long, dry spell in February, he packed up and took the train



west. Dovie was left alone with only her brother, Wilbur, for help, and two small children to care for.

She walked over to the bed where the babies were sleeping. It was a miracle that they were both still in bed at this time of the morning. Kat had ended up sideways across the bed and Tom was in the center. Dovie felt Kat's forehead, and was relieved to find that it was cool to the touch. It was unusual for her daughter to fall asleep as early as she had the night before much less sleep until after daybreak. As a rule it was a fight to get Katherine to sleep at all before Dovie went to bed, but the child had fallen asleep draped across the wood box and Wilbur had carried her to bed.

Little Tom opened his eyes and smiled at his mother. "There you are, you little Booger." She cooed softly to the baby as she got a fresh diaper off the shelf.

"Well, you ain't wet too bad. The pad ain't even damp." At least that's one thing I won't have to wash out today."

Monday was laundry day, and today was Tuesday, but Dovie usually had diapers and children's clothes to wash every day. Little Tom went through diapers like rabbits through a garden row.

"Mama," Katherine sat up and crawled up beside the baby. "I had a dream."

"What was it about?"

"I dreamed that I was on a horse, and I was riding up the road real fast, and the branch of the June apple tree hit me and knocked me in the pigpen."

Katherine was over three years old now, and had an active imagination.

"Well, did you get hurt?" Dovie asked.

"No, but the pigs were kissing me all over the face. Will you sing me a song about a little girl and she rides a horse and the tree knocks her into the pigpen?"

Dovie was exasperated. "Law have mercy, not now. I've got too much to do to make up a song like that right now."

"But I want a song."

"Maybe later, how about I sing an old song?"

"Oh, I'm tired of those old songs."

"Well, we'll make up a song later."

"Smell my feet." The child held up her clean warm foot up to her mother. Dovie sniffed at it and pretended to gag.

"Shooo! Stinky feet!" she cried in mock disgust and little Kat giggled wildly.

"Smell again," the child demanded.

"Hold still or I'll end up sticking Tom with his latch pin."

"Did you ever stick me?"

"No, but you didn't have a wiggly sister around."

Dovie finished diapering the baby and got clothing for both children from the shelf. She wanted to tell Josiah about Katherine's dream, but she knew she would forget it before she had time to write it down.

"Here Kat, jump down and start getting dressed," Dovie said placing the little girl's clothes on the edge of the bed.

"You get me dressed."

"No, just start getting dressed, and I'll put your socks and shoes on for you."

"You get Tom dressed."

"Tom's a baby."

"He can get dressed. He just likes to act like he can't."

"Get your gown off, and get your dress on," Dovie was beginning to lose patience.

"No."

"Do you want me to cut a hickory limb and wear you out?"

"No." Katherine frowned as though she were trying to decide if her mother would really whip her. She had seen children spanked, but she had never been hit in her life.

"Then get your clothes on right now."

"I can't do it. I'm too little," she claimed as she pulled the gown off over her head. She struggled into her loose cotton slip, and tried to figure out which way her dress should be turned.

"Here," Dovie said taking the child's dress and fitting it on over her sleep tousled head.

"Is Tom a boy or a girl?" the child asked as her mother buttoned the little blue flowered dress.

"Tom's a boy. You know that. He's your brother."

"Well, why does he wear a dress? Boys wear britches."

"He's a baby. Babies wear dresses. When he's big and learns to dress himself and use the outhouse, he'll wear britches and a shirt." Dovie tried to picture that day but couldn't.

"He needs to wear britches, and he needs you to cut all his curls off. He wants to look like a little boy."



"So that's it," thought Dovie. Katherine always pouted when people made a fuss over Tom's golden curls. She hated when her mother braided her straight brown hair into two pigtails. "By the time he's your age, he'll have short hair and britches. Are you happy?"

"Okay, but he really hates wearing that dress."

Dovie finished dressing the babies and took them to the table to eat the oatmeal that she had cooked earlier. Wilber came in with an armload of wood and joined her.

"I'll feed them younguns if you milk that old cow."

"You didn't milk her already?"

"No, she don't like me. She only likes you."

*"Lord, please give me strength until you can give me help,"* Dovie prayed silently.

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When the morning chores were finished, Dovie bundled the two little ones into a little wagon that Josiah had made for them. She covered them with a small, warm blanket, and headed toward the potato patch. It was a sunny day, and she expected it to turn warm soon.

Wilbur had already taken hoes to the garden, and had headed back for the seed potatoes that they had cut up for planting earlier. As they arrived at the garden, they heard a horse and Wilbur ran over to the road.

"It's Pierce," Dovie's brother called back.

*"Now we'll get some help,"* Dovie thought. Josiah's half brother, Pierce, had helped her quite a bit in Josiah's absence.

"Y'all fixin to plant?" Pierce called from his place in the saddle.

"Fixin to," confirmed Dovie.

"You're gonna need some help," he said adjusting his hat.

"We'd appreciate any help we can get."

"Them younguns ain't gonna stay in that wagon long."

"No, I hope they'll stay on the blanket under that tree."

"Reckon they will?"

"I hope so." Dovie wished that Pierce would stop talking and get down to help.

"You got any more hoes?"

"We've got three. Wilbur can run back and get the other one."

"I'll be back in a little bit then. Don't get too far along."

Dovie sighed as Pierce turned his horse and road away. She wondered how much help he would be that day.

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Dovie settled the two little ones at their place on the blanket.

"You watch Tom," she told the little girl. "Try to keep him happy, and call me if anything goes wrong. Don't let him wiggle off this blanket too far."

"How am I gonna keep him happy?" Katherine said her expression sullen.

"Here are your babies," Dovie said pulling a spool doll and a clothespin doll from her apron pocket.

"Oh, we'll just play then," the girl said taking the toys.

Tom could crawl, but he would stay put if Katherine would only keep playing with him. The two were content for the moment, but Dovie looked back twice before traveling the few feet to the garden.

"You dig the hole and I'll drop the taters in, then we'll switch," Dovie told her brother.

They had not gotten far when Dovie heard Tom's cry.

"Where's Katy?" Wilbur asked.

"Where is Katy?" Dovie repeated. "Kat!"

"Maybe she's gone off to pee," Wilbur offered.

"Maybe so," agreed Dovie. "Katherine, answer Mama. Katherine?"

Dovie ran up to the baby and looked at the surrounding shrubbery.

"She wouldn't go all the way up to the outhouse by herself, would she?" asked Wilbur.

"Come here and watch Tom, and I'll go find her," Dovie's voice betrayed her worry.

She handed off the baby to her brother and ran up to the outhouse. She called out as she opened the door wider, but Katherine wasn't there. She ran around the house, but couldn't find her daughter. She called out frantically, as she returned to the garden.

Katherine still wasn't there, so Dovie ran down to the stream thinking that Katherine may have wanted water. She called and called as she ran, and stopped as she thought she heard the child's voice faintly in the distance. The sound seemed to come from downstream, so Katherine ran in that direction yanking branches out of her way.



As she ran, her mind raced through the possibilities for danger. Bears and panthers had been spotted in those woods from time to time. She tried to remember how long it had been since she had heard a panther's scream from the mountain above her home. She pictured Katherine trying to pet a cub or a porcupine. As her own foot slipped at the edge of the stream, she pictured her child falling into the swimming hole up ahead. A child could drown in even a little water. She cried in frustration as a laurel limb caught her skirt.

"Katherine, stay still!" she called. "Don't move, baby, Mama's coming."

Dovie finally caught sight of her daughter through the brush. The girl was sitting at the edge of the swimming hole dangling a small branch into the water. Josiah and Pierce had blasted the spot out, and Dovie knew it was deep enough for adults to swim comfortably.

"Sit right still, Katy. Mama's almost there," Dovie tried to sound calm, so the child would not jump up and fall into the water.

"What are you doing?" she asked evenly when she came into easy reach of the girl.

"I'm fishing," replied the child. Katherine continued to dangle the branch; her shoes were on the ground and her stockings had been thoroughly rubbed into the muddy bank where she sat.

Very carefully, Katherine pulled her daughter up and away from the creek.

"No, I want to fish," the child demanded as she pulled back toward the creek against her mother's firm grasp.

"You're coming with me, and I don't ever want to catch you here again."

"I have to fish. Then Papa will take me fishing when he comes home."

"I'll whip you and your Papa too."

"You won't whip me. I'm Papa's baby, not yours."

Dovie reached over and grabbed up the little branch with the two wet leaves remaining on the end. She caught the child's dress tail up and struck her legs three times before stopping herself.

Katherine's mouth flew open in momentary disbelief, and then she began howling. She cried and choked as her mother led her back toward the garden.

"If you ever take off like that and scare me again, I'll stripe you from head to toe," Dovie warned as she pulled the wailing girl. She blinked at the tears in her own eyes, and hated herself for striking her child.

Dovie heard only Katherine as they approached the garden, so she was utterly surprised when she saw a group of her neighbors at the garden plot. Pierce had returned with a wagonload of her in-laws and neighbors. They were taking up tools and getting ready to help with the planting. Her sister-in-law, Sara Jane, had Tom, and was playing with him on the blanket.

Dovie tried to hide the fact that she was wiping her eyes by mopping her brow and cheeks with her handkerchief as she walked up to her neighbors and picked Katherine up. The little girl rubbed her snotty nose on her mother's shoulder and hid her face from the visitors.

"Hey there, little bit," Pierce patted the child's back. "What happened to you?"

At hearing her uncle's voice Katherine looked up and said, "Mama beat me with a briar."

"She did?" Pierce said sounding surprised.

"She beat me a hundred times," the child answered snubbing.

"And I bet you're a big girl and didn't even cry," Pierce said.

Katherine looked surprised, and then nodded her head.

"But I bet you'll mind your Mama from now on," the uncle continued, and the child nodded again. "Then here's a stick of candy for you, and give this one to Sara Jane for baby Tom. Why, a big, good girl like you would never worry her Mama like that a second time."

As Dovie set the girl down, she took the candy and ran off to her young Aunt.

"Looks like that whipping hurt you as much as it did her," Pierce said as Dovie wiped her eyes with her handkerchief again, then rubbed at the mucus on her dress.

"That youngun like to scared me to death," she said. She did not add that her tears were partly from the relief at seeing her helpful in-laws and neighbors.

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The work was finished quickly, and the women of the group helped Dovie in preparing a large noon meal for everyone. They had brought some food, and Dovie supplied enough to feed the group well.

When the dinner was finished, and the children were sleeping, the neighbors left, and the family gathered onto the porch to talk.

"Does Josiah say when he'll come back and get you?" Suda asked, her mouth drawn tight. It was clear to Dovie that her Suda did not like the idea of her oldest son and his family moving far away.



"He don't say," Dovie said with a sigh. "He writes on and on about narrow gauge railroads and the mountains in Colorado and me and the kids, but he doesn't mention a thing about when we'll be able to go to him."

"What do you hear from your folks?" Suda persisted.

"He stayed with them when he first went out there, but when they started working up in the mountains he moved off with the crew. They don't see him much any more."

"I bet he will come back and get you though," said twelve year-old Sara Jane.

"He won't just leave you here and not come back."

"Sara Jane!" Dovie could tell that Suda was shocked and exasperated.

"Well, I bet he will come and get you," Josiah's sister repeated.

"What in the world would make you say a stupid thing like that?" Suda demanded.

"Aunt Tildy said that lots of men move off to the west and start new families. I bet Josiah won't do that though."

"Why, of course not," Dovie said quickly adding, "I better go check the younguns."

Dovie glanced at the sleeping children then ran out the back and up the stairs. She was so angry that she stood just inside the door with her hand covering her mouth. She was breathing hard through her nose. Her eyes were closed and her heart pounding. So people were talking about her and Josiah. She forced herself to calm down, and moved to the chair by the front window. After all, Josiah was innocent wasn't he? Dovie fought against the brief flash of doubt. She sat still and listened to the conversation on the porch below her.

"Why do you keep saying that over and over?" Sara Jane was saying. Dovie realized that Suda had been reprimanding her daughter.

"What else did the crazy old bat have to say?" It was Pierce speaking this time.

"She said that men have needs," said Sara Jane nonchalantly.

"That crazy old woman... telling a little girl... Wilbur, let's me and you go put the tools away," Pierce said quickly.

There was a pause in the conversation, and then Suda spoke.

"What kind of mess has your Great-Aunt Tildy been telling you about men and their needs?"

"She said men have the need, and they have to have a woman around."

"Just what do you think she meant by that?"

"I guess cooking and cleaning."

"You're not stupid, Sara Jane. We've talked. You know exactly what that crazy old woman means."

"Oh," Sara Jane said softly after a short hesitation. "So Tildy thinks that even though Josiah loves Dovie and all, he'll ... kind of have to meet a girl off in Colorado... and he won't come home."

Dovie gasped as she continued eavesdropping.

"It happens, Sara Jane, but I hope that Josiah is the kind of man that I raised him to be instead of the kind of man who would do that. And if he would take up with someone, I hope to God he comes to hisself and comes home."

So, thought Dovie, Suda thinks that her son isn't that kind of man, but even she thinks that there is a possibility that he could be seeing another woman. She tried to act

as though nothing had been said for the rest of the visit, and thanked her visitors for their help before they left.

"Little girl, don't you act like you don't have a family," Suda said as she got into the wagon. "You let us know any time you need help. You can't get all your chores done with just you and that boy and those two babies. You send for us."

"I surely will. I'll do that, Maw," Dovie said taking the older woman's hand gratefully. Dovie hadn't called Suda anything during all her years of marriage, but now it felt right to call her mother-in-law the same thing that her husband and child did.

Suda smiled and nodded.

Dovie slept very little that night, and there would be many more nights that she would lie awake and wonder if she would ever see her husband again. She told herself to trust in her husband, and then she thought more about trusting God to send Josiah back. On Sundays she listened intently to sermons, and at night she prayed herself to sleep.

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At times her faith slipped. Many times she thought about writing to Josiah and asking what he did for female companionship. She made up letters in her head until she was exhausted, and tried to force herself to trust Josiah and forget the words of crazy old Tildy to her grandniece, Sara Jane.

Josiah's letters were steady but brief. Sometimes they didn't come for long periods of time, and Dovie had to borrow money from Pierce, but eventually the notes and money would come.

It was hard to keep the destructive thoughts out of her head as time dragged on, and as Dovie noticed that little Katherine no longer mentioned her father. She worked as



hard as she could through the long, hot days of summer, and her neighbors and in-laws were often glad of the willing pair of hands she brought to them. The winter nights were worse with no visiting neighbor to entertain her with stories and gossip, and no garden to exhaust her into slumber.

It was early November of 1904 and Josiah had been gone nearly two years when she heard the noises outside. It was after dark, and she was telling Katherine the story of Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego when she heard horses. Visitors at that hour usually meant that there was bad news or someone was in need, but a woman alone with only a young brother and two small children would be their last choice to turn to for help.

There was banging at the outbuildings. Wilbur eased himself over to the fireplace and took down the gun.

"Shush, little Katy. Let's play a little quiet game for a minute," she told her drowsy daughter.

There was a series of loud thumps on the porch, and then there was singing. "I don't like Old Joe Clark. I'll tell you the reason why. He blowed his nose on a piece of corn bread and called it apple pie."

"Josiah?" asked Wilbur.

"Josiah!" gasped Dovie. "Watch these babies, Wilbur."

Dovie ran out the door not stopping to close it against the winter's chill.

"Josiah!" she called running into his waiting arms. He swept her up and held her for a long moment. She wanted to ask all of the questions that she had saved up, but all she could do was hold onto the collar of his coat and let the many months of longing flood out with her tears.

"You've come to get us?" she asked finally.

"No, I've come home for good."

"What happened?" She felt her chest fluttering like a million butterflies.

"Well," he said "You know those bushes with the red berries behind the house?"

"Yes?" she said, puzzled at his odd answer.

"I got to thinking about those bushes, and I got to missing them. I never took time to figure out just what they are, and that bothered me."

"You missed the bushes?" she frowned.

"Yes, I missed the bushes. The point is, little Dove, that I could take you and the younguns far off to Colorado, and aimed to do that all along. But, I couldn't take the bushes with the berries, or swimming hole, or the punktatum bushes that we planted over by the smoke house. I couldn't take the church or the boys over at the store. I just couldn't take the whole of Jonas Ridge with me, so I decided to come on home and stay."

"Well, you took long enough," Dovie said laughing and dabbing at her face with the handkerchief from her apron pocket.

"Who's that?" Little Katherine called from the doorway. Josiah and Dovie moved inside into the light.

"It's Papa," said Josiah. "I'm home for good."

Katherine stared at him intently. "I don't like your whiskers," she said finally.

"Well, I'll shave them off in the morning," he said reaching for Katherine who dodged his grasp. "I'll shave them first thing, right after I find that big old sleepy eyed doll and all the candy I brought you."

"I'm glad you're home, Papa," said the little girl grasping his sleeve.

## Chapter 7 Dovie's Sons 1918

"Shoo, have mercy, Cora get away from me. You stink to high heavens. Have you been eating ramps?" Dovie pushed her seven-year-old daughter away.

"I been eating kill sallet with ramps in it. Aunt Effie gave it to me. Did you know she kills her sallet with milk instead of vinegar? Why don't you make yours with milk?"

"I like vinegar better."

"Did you know that people make it with milk?"

"Yes, and I know you're stinking me to death."

"Let the child eat all she wants. A good bate of ramps is a good blood cleaner. It's just what a youngun needs this time of year." Mama Gaynelle broke the thread from the button she was sewing, and re-knotted her thread to begin sewing on another.

"I've got to sleep with this girl," Dovie said giving Cora another playful push.

"Then you better eat some sallet yourself so you can stand her," Mama Gaynelle said.

Dovie was visiting her brother Wilbur and his wife Effie during the spring of 1918. The couple had come to live with Mama Gaynelle after Dovie's father died in the flu epidemic the year before, and Effie was now expecting their second child.

Dovie was thankful not to be pregnant that year. She liked the way her apron tied right around her waist. She felt like a young mother with only half her children along. The thirteen-year-old twins, James and John were with her, as well as ten-year-old Cleve, seven-year-old Cora, and eight-month-old Cabe. Katherine, now nineteen, was off at school in Berea, Kentucky. Tom, at seventeen, was working for the North Carolina



Highway Commission along with his father. Five-year-old Suda May and the two-year-old twins Hoyt and Leona were back on Jonas Ridge with Josiah's mother. A set of twins and a baby boy had died at birth, and Dovie felt that she had been diapering, feeding, or grieving for babies all her life.

"Is Effie feeding the boys ramps too?" Dovie asked her daughter.

"They're off into something, but they've been eating ramps without the sallet."

"Is there going to be any left at dinner time?"

"I just had a little taste."

"It smells like you had a whole dish pan full."

"I think it stinks good."

"Yes, I guess it stinks real good. Why don't you go see if Effie needs any help?"

Dovie turned to Mama Gaynelle as the little girl ran toward the house. "Ramps are the stinkiest things."

"They're not too bad if you cook them." The older woman continued with her sewing.

"I like to use a little early garden onion instead. I know ramps are good like a spring tonic, but I have too many stinking little younguns in my house." Dovie retrieved the cup of tea she had resting on the banister and took a sip.

"That's fine if you can get onions to come up this early."

"I plant early and cover them so the bulbs don't freeze, but Josiah has people from off in Morganton that send us some of their early stuff and we send them some of our late stuff. They swear that taters are better from up home."

"I guess Josiah gets to see them more now that y'all have that Ford."

"That's a fact. It used to be a three-day trip every time we went, but now it's hardly any time at all." Dovie finished her tea and held the cup protectively.

"Those things scare the daylights out of me."

"Oh, I love that car. It ain't hardly big enough to take all the younguns anywhere all at once, but we manage."

"I bet it cost a year's pay."

"With what Josiah makes with the highway commission, and what me and the younguns can make off pulling galax and all, we're able to put some money back."

"You still pull galax and collect herbs?"

"I got in the habit when Josiah worked off, and he couldn't always get money home right regular."

"I hope you don't keep all your money in the bank." Mama Gaynelle snipped the threads as she finished attaching lace to the collar of the blouse she was making and turned the material around to work on a cuff.

"No, Josiah has a few good hiding holes."

"Well, it ain't really none of my business, but I don't trust a bank."

"Me neither. I don't want to go all the way to a bank for a little spending money anyway. But Josiah did a good thing by getting that Model T Touring Car. He'll be back in time for dinner, but before he bought it he'd have been gone another day."

"Well, it just worries me to think of you flying around in that thing," Mama Gaynelle shook her head as she pulled another piece of lace out of her sewing basket.

"So that's to be a Sunday blouse?" Dovie leaned over and inspected Mama's work in progress. "It sure will be nice."

"Where do you reckon them boys is?" Mama asked. "I haven't seen them all morning."

"I just know they're into something. It wouldn't be like them not to be."

Dovie stood and looked out from the end of the porch. "Boys! Hey, boys!" she yelled. "It looks like I'm gonna have to go looking for them," she told Mama Gaynelle. "Boys!" she yelled again.

"Yes, Mama." A voice came back from the other side of the shed.

"What are you fellers into?"

"Nothing, Mama." She recognized the voice as Cleve's.

"What's nothing?"

"We're over watching the men at the lumber camp, and I came back for some water. We're not bothering anybody."

"I just bet you're not. Go tell your brothers not to bother those men one little bit. As a matter of fact, tell them to get back here."

"But, we're not bothering anyone, honest."

"I'll bother your little hind ends. You tell those boys to get back here right this instant." Dovie returned to her chair and placed the cup underneath for safe keeping.

"You know, it's real handy to have the men working close by, but it looks like they're tearing up the whole world over there," Mama Gaynelle paused in her sewing and gestured toward the camp.

"It's just awful. I can't imagine everyone around signing for them to do that, and I can't imagine Daddy signing for a company to cut his timber at all."



"Well, that's the way of it when a body needs money. Besides, he just sort of lost heart about the land when the power people began building that lake over at your grandpa's old home place. It's been two years, but they have a long way to go."

"It just don't seem right to flood all that over. After the big flood two years ago, I can't stand the thought of it. I don't see why they can't do something about the cemeteries at the very least." Dovie frowned as she sat back in the rocker. "They could dig up all the dead people and move them or something."

"Law have mercy girl, they couldn't move the cemeteries. Your Daddy's people have been buried over there for a lot of years. Their caskets might even be falling apart. If they'd try to move all those people, there would be haints all over the country forever more."

"I guess so," Dovie rocked quietly for a moment. "Still, it don't seem right to have Grandma and Grandpa buried under a lake."

"No, it don't. They say the lake will give enough power for the whole countryside to have electricity right in the house, but I sure hate to see whole farms and churches and cemeteries flooded over. It like to worried your Daddy to death. That along with the great war."

"Maybe it really did," Dovie suggested.

"It could be the reason he took sick," Mama Gaynelle agreed. "It's been known to happen."

The women fell into a thoughtful silence. Dovie took up her knitting, while Mama Gaynelle continued to carefully stitch the delicate lace onto her blouse.

"Mama!" came a cry from toward the lumber camp. "Mama!" The voice was deep and ragged, but Dovie knew it as Cleve's and she knew that something was terribly wrong. She threw down the knitting, jumped off the end of the porch, and ran toward the voice. She caught up with a crying Cleve at the other side of the shed.

"Mama, they're hurt," tears ran down the desperate child's face.

"Where?"

"At the camp... they were riding in the dump car."

Dovie ran toward the camp with Cleve close behind her. When she reached the overturned dump car at the end of the track, she stepped back briefly before running to her twin sons. John was holding his arm and sitting over James. Dovie feared that James was dead until she saw his panic stricken eyes. It was then that she saw a stick running completely through her son's cheek and blood gushing from his mouth.

"I cut that stick off with the clipper," one of the workers said as Dovie fell on her knees beside the boy. "I was afraid it would tear his whole face up if I left it on the tree or tried to pull it out."

"That's good, you did the right thing," Dovie said forcing herself to appear calm. "I need clean rags."

She heard a rip behind her and turned to see that Mama Gaynelle had followed her and was tearing the newly sewn blouse. Dovie gratefully accepted the cloth and began dabbing at the blood on the boy's cheek and mouth.

"Somebody go meet Josiah. Tell him James is bleeding something awful, and he needs to stop it and get here fast."

"Stop and get here fast," a second workman said and untied the reins of a horse from a nearby hitching post.

"Stop the blood and get here fast," she yelled over her shoulder as the man mounted the horse. "Fast," she repeated as he rode away.

"We were coming, Mama. We just wanted one more ride," John sobbed.

"His arm might be broke. It's swelling something awful," Mama Gaynelle said as she ran her hand gently over John's arm. "Somebody get me some boards and bandages for a splint."

"Don't pull it," John cried louder.

"James, can you open your mouth just a little?" Dovie asked. As the boy parted his lips, more blood ran out.

"Are any of these other boys hurt?" Mama Gaynelle asked.

"Just bumps and bruises," a worker answered.

Dovie saw Cleve coming back to the scene of the accident followed by several women with boards and bandages. Annie from the commissary was there holding a kettle of steaming water with two big pot holders.

James coughed and blood spewed from his mouth.

"Dear Lord, he's choking," said one of the women.

"Hold your head forward, son. That's a good boy." Dovie spoke evenly and softly in effort to keep the boy calm. "*Lord, please just let them find Josiah,*" she thought. She held the cloth gently over the boy's lips with her fingers while keeping some of the cloth under the stick in his cheek with her thumb, her other hand held his head still.



"You better pull out the stick," said Cleve. "Get the stick out."

Dovie carefully changed to a thicker piece of clean cloth that one of the women handed to her. "No, son, that might make him bleed faster." James squeezed his eyes closed and whimpered.

*"Lord, please don't let this boy bleed to death in my arms. I've lost three little babies, but I don't think I can live through that,"* she prayed softly. As she watched the blood soak the cloth she heard one of the other women praying softly.

Suddenly James' eyes opened, and he searched his mother's face. Dovie gently lifted the cloth and saw that the bleeding had stopped. "Thank God, son, they've found Papa. Papa knows." James' face softened in relief and he closed his eyes.

"Josiah is saying the words, ain't he?" Mama Gaynelle said softly in Dovie's ear.

Dovie nodded. "I expect he's on his way," she answered quietly. Dovie was proud of her husband's healing gift, but she knew that some of the workers were from off and might not believe in healers. This was not the time to have them talking.

It seemed like forever before she heard the Model T pulling up to the camp. Josiah told Tom to send the crowd away, and gently but confidently took over James' care. "Dovie, this stick is all the way through his cheek and clear into the roof of his mouth. I can get it out and keep the bleeding stopped, but he's got to go to the doctor. The new hospital in Morganton is our best bet. It'll take all the doctoring he can get to keep him from getting blood poison."

"What about John?" Dovie looked down at her blood-spattered apron.

"Mama Gaynelle did a good job with that splint, but it might pay to have the doctor look at him too. You can't be too careful. No, you sure can't."

"I hate to go looking like this, but it can't be helped. They'll just have to understand."

"You've done enough, little gal," Josiah told Dovie. "You must be plumb wore out. Tom can help me here, and don't you want to stay here at Mama Gaynelle's and rest?"

"Sure, you'd rest with our boys in this shape? You know I'm going."

"I reckon you will."

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The ride into Morganton seemed longer and rougher than any Dovie had ever taken. She sat in the back seat and held James' head on one shoulder and Baby Cabe on her lap while John sat in front beside his father. During the trip, John talked about the accident.

"Mama, we was coming like Cleve told us to, but we wanted to take one last ride."

"And was that the thing to do?" his Papa asked.

"Well, no," John hung his head. "We knowed we'd get in trouble, but... the other fellers were doing it."

"So you decided to take one more ride," Dovie was anxious to hear what happened.

"It really wouldn't take long, or so we thought. There was about six of us in that dump car, and that big old red-headed boy was supposed to stop us. He pulled on the brake and nothing happened, then I grabbed the brake and pulled again and still nothing happened. It was like we just got faster and faster, and when we got down the hill, we

completely jumped the track. I flew out of the dump car and was laying on the ground hurt. I saw James on his knees with that branch in his face and started yelling for help. That man grabbed some tree shears and cut the branch then he laid James down on the grass. I think I heard Cleve yelling at some point, and then you and Grandma were there. It was awful.

"I hope to never see the like of that again in all my life," Dovie agreed.

"Will we get a whippin when we get home, Papa?" John asked.

"No, I think you boys have had enough of a whippin without me," Josiah replied.

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At the hospital, the doctor took over swiftly, and sent Josiah, Dovie, and the baby to wait with John while he stitched James and tended his wound.

"We'll keep James a day or two just to be sure," the doctor told the couple when he had taken care of both boys. "It's a miracle that he didn't bleed to death before you could get him here."

"It sure is that," Josiah agreed. "It's a miracle of God, and I thank him that we still have our boy."

Dovie watched her husband as he talked with the physician. Josiah never took credit for healing and he never took pay. Neighbors would have him come in from the fields at harvest or wake him in the middle of the night to have Josiah pull a tooth or come away to tend an ailing child. The odd jar of jam, special leather work, or some other token would be sent to their house, but Josiah never took money. He had the respect of the community, but had he trained in healing as this doctor did, he would also have wealth.



As Josiah assured the doctor that they had relatives to stay with while James was in hospital, Dovie stood proudly by. The wealth of the world would not have made her prouder than she was at that moment.

## Chapter 8 Cleve 1925

*"I'll marry Bill Eckland if it's the last thing I do."*

*"Okay little girl, you go ahead and do that very thing. You burn your butt, and you'll sit on the blister."*

Dovie recalled the words she had exchanged with Katherine before her oldest daughter ran off to get married. Now as she watched Katherine cutting cloth for a dress, she wondered just how bad the blister was that the girl endured.

Josiah had not taken the announcement of Katherine's impending marriage well. He had sent her to school to become a teacher, and she had taught until she was 23, first in a room above Pierce's store and then at the new school building. Josiah had expected her to get married some day, but not to Bill Eckland.

*"You drunken little son of a bitch,"* Josiah had yelled when Bill had brought Katherine home in his rickety roadster with the missing bumper.

*"And you, you little hell-roping trollop,"* he bellowed at Katherine. *"You get your damned little ass in that house and stay there."*

Josiah didn't speak to Katherine for months after she announced that she had slipped off and married in Gaffney, South Carolina. In spite of her parent's suspicions, Katherine had not been pregnant at the time of the marriage, but she had two babies now at 26 and last year she lost a child that she had carried nearly to term. Katherine's abdomen and back were bruised when Dovie attended the delivery, and she had not believed her daughter's story of falling off the porch. There were other bruises, but Katherine always had a story to go with them. Dovie knew that her daughter had never

been an awkward person before, but she hesitated to mention too much to Josiah for fear that he would fly into a rage and kill Bill.

Now Katherine was pregnant again, and as she finished cutting and straightened up, she sighed deeply.

"My back is killing me," Katherine said, rubbing the small of her back with her knuckles. "I wasn't so tired and I didn't ache so much the other times."

"Well, every time is a little different, and every child that comes is different too," Dovie was using a dipper to fill the kettle from the water bucket.

"Do you ever think of the babies you lost?" Katherine asked sitting down at the table.

"Oh yes. There ain't too much time goes by without I think about them."

"I wish Bill had buried my baby in the church yard instead of on the hill behind the house. It just don't seem right." Katherine took up the tooth pick holder and began rolling it back and forth in her hands.

"If you'll remember, your Papa and Pierce buried my babies down at the edge of the woods just like they were old dogs or something. I wanted to lay them out and take them to the church yard."

"No, I didn't know about it. I guess I wasn't around for that or I'd have pitched a fit. You should've pitched one yourself."

"I wasn't in no shape to pitch any fit, and I don't guess your Papa knew what I wanted. It was all I could do to hold my head up. I had too hard a time birthing both times... that poor little boy with his neck broke from the forceps. He was perfect... just like a big old baby doll." Dovie gazed out the kitchen window at the trees down by the



stream. "I guess if I hadn't had old Doctor Warner I'd have been dead too." Dovie sighed and placed the kettle on the stove. "When I lost the twins, I guess it seemed right that they'd be beside their brother. Why don't you get us some cups and make us some tea when this boils?" Katherine got up and fished two cups out of the cupboard and rummaged around for the tea.

Doctor Warner had attended all of Dovie's births except Bunie, and Granny Stark had helped with that easy birth. Granny was an excellent midwife, but Doctor Warner had retired to the area and Josiah rode off to get him when it was possible. Dovie often thought about Josiah's respect for trained physicians. He never mentioned his own healing work to them. "*They'll just think I'm some ignorant, backwoods hick,*" he had told Dovie.

"I don't know what's wrong with men," Katherine continued. "They don't seem to think of the poor little lost babies as even people."

"Well, I see them as my babies the same as all the rest. Josiah didn't want me to even name those babies. He said I'd just be hurting myself, but I've got the names right in my head. The little boy is named Ben and the twins are Lazelle and Lucy."

"Why don't you make Papa show you exactly where they are and list them in the Bible?" Katherine took the steaming kettle and poured water in the tea pot that Victoria had sent.

"I guess I'll do that if I ever think of it when I have time. I don't have the energy to mess with too much of anything right now, and besides I have Dolly and this here new little one and all the others to take care of."

Dovie was pregnant again too, and if this child made it through she would have thirteen living children. Dolly at two years old was a delicate child. The doctors in Morganton said that the little girl had a heart defect, and that she would need further testing. One of the twins, Leona, had a mysterious ailment that caused her to faint when there was any kind of commotion, but the doctors could not find the reason. Katherine and Tom were both married. James and John were living in Mortimer and worked at the cotton mill. At seventeen, Cleve worked the fields and attended school. Cora, Suda May, and the twins Hoyt and Leona were all in school, and Bunie and Laurel stayed home with Dovie and Dolly.

"There comes Roy with his banjo and Uncle Jeeter. Cleve, go get my fiddle and let's play a little tune," Dovie heard Josiah's familiar call.

Cleve banged the door open, and ran up the stairs two at a time to get his guitar. It was no time until he was back down the stairs and into the new back room for his father's fiddle.

The house was now twice the size that it had been when Dovie moved in. Josiah and his older sons had built the addition in the saddlebag style five years ago. The fireplace and chimney were now at the center of the house, and a lumber addition mirrored the original log structure. They had sawed the lumber themselves at the sawmill Josiah had built on the hill above the house as a way of earning extra money when work was slow. Tom kept the equipment in shape, but the sawmill was rarely used these days.

"Oh law, Uncle Jeeter'll have my younguns awake all night with those old booger tales." Dovie scalded the dishes she had just washed with the remainder of the boiling water from the kettle.

"You might get him off on one of them old stories about the war between the states or he will for sure. You'd think an old old man like him would have better sense than scaring a bunch of little children to death," Katherine said as she poured tea in their cups. "All those old men want to tell that one about raw head and bloody bones. I hate that story."

"Yeah but you'd sit right on his lap and listen when you were little," Dovie answered chuckling.

"Sure I would," Katherine agreed, "he'd give me a nickel every time."

The women stopped talking to listen to the music from outside as Cleve sang *Will There Be Any Stars In My Crown* in his clear tenor.

Will there be any stars, any stars in my crown  
When at evening the sun goeth down?  
When I wake with the blest in the mansions of rest  
Will there be any stars in my crown?

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The fire hissed as Uncle Jeeter spat another stream of tobacco juice into it, and the nasty, sweet tobacco smell turned Dovie's stomach. Supper had been exhausting, with the girls' miserable bickering and the boys showing off for company.

"Pass the 'tatas," Laurel had asked, and Leona laughed wickedly.

"Listen to little Miss Proper," Leona sneered. "Po-ta-toes – where in the devil was she raised?"

"Leave her alone, Leona," Suda May said dropping a spoonful of boiled potatoes in Laurel's plate.

"Would you like some tea, Miss Po-ta-to?" Lenoa continued.

"Leona," Cora said in a warning voice.



"Miss Proper don't know what a tater is anymore since she's been to town,"

Leona persisted with her badgering.

"Leona, leave the little thing alone," Cora demanded. "Maybe she'll learn some manners and how to say things right when she gets to school. You never have."

"I'm as smart as the next one," Leona's voice raised in pitch.

"Now that's enough, Cora," said Josiah. "You know not to get Leona excited."

"Yeah, Cora," Leona said very self satisfied.

Dovie rubbed her forehead as she remembered the conversation. She wondered if they would ever find the cause of Leona's fainting spells. She looked healthy enough, somewhat chubbier than the other children, and nothing like fragile Dolly. Josiah thought that there may be something wrong with the blood flow in Leona's brain, but he certainly didn't say anything to that effect around Leona. Perhaps it was the temper fits that made the girl react that way.

"Uncle Jeeter, tell us a story," said Cleve. "How about a war story?"

Dovie smiled at Cleve, grateful that he had not asked for a ghost story.

"Sure boy, ye got any store bought chew on ye?" the old man asked then sent another stream sizzling into the fire.

"Nary a drop, but I'll take you over to Pierce's store in the morning," Cleve promised.

"Can't open the store on Sunday," Jeeter pointed out.

"I've got a key. We'll just write it down," Cleve promised.

"Let's see," the old man said leaning back in his chair. "Did I tell you about the first time I met your Grandpappy Teems?" Jeeter said, his eyes seeming to cloud over.

"The little'uns ain't heard it," Josiah said taking the poker and adjusting the logs in the fire.

"The damn Yankees got us," the old man began, and the eyes of the younger children were wide and intent on Uncle Jeeter.

"We was both took to Point Lookout, Maryland. I never seed old George Henry before, but when they said that there was somebody from the Carolina mountains in the next building, I slipped over the first chance I got," Jeeter said. "It didn't matter that I never knowed him. He was home folks."

"Was he happy to see you?" Hoyt asked.

"As happy as he could be in the shape he was in. He was shot in the calf of the leg," the old man continued, "and when I first looked at it they was maggots in the bloody wound."

Dovie saw Leona grab her mouth and gag.

"The doctor came cleaned them out, but more got in there. Old George Henry got better pretty quick though once the mess was finally cleaned out. They'd talked about cutting his leg off, but thank God they didn't have to." The old man paused and stared into the fire before continuing. "I was grazed on the shoulder myself when they captured me."

"Was they good to you?" Bunie asked.

"Some was good," he assured her. "Some was meaner than hell."

Dovie winced at Jeeter's language, but she had learned long ago that mentioning it would only make him worse. Besides, he was a good old man in many other ways.

"Git me a cup of water, girl," Uncle Jeeter said to Leona, and the child complied without her usual crankiness.

The old man spat out the last of his tobacco, took a drink of water, and continued with his tale.

"They was one time when a bunch of wounded fellers just came in, and they was laying around on the ground waiting for someone to find a place for them, when this fat old lieutenant came charging in on his horse. He ran right over several of them wounded fellers and laughed about it... called them Rebel scum. That was his exact words too. One of them fellers died, but he didn't care."

"Did our side treat them mean too?" Hoyt asked.

"I'd hope not, but there's good and bad in every bunch," the old man said. "War brings out the worst in the mean, and sometimes it brings out the best in the good too."

"Not everybody around here was Rebel either," Cleve pointed out to Hoyt.

"No?" the younger boy was surprised.

"The truth of the matter is, we didn't have no dogs in that fight in some ways." Uncle Jeeter agreed. "I want states to have rights of their own, but I never have cared whether old rich bastards had slaves or not."

"It was a rich man's war and a poor man's fight," Josiah nodded.

"They say it for it's true," agreed Uncle Jeeter. "Men were conscripted into the South's army, and I joined up to fight for the Confederacy my own self, but some went off to fight for the Union."

"Like them Blalocks from down in the Globe," Cleve said chuckling.

"That was pretty quare," Josiah said.



Jeeter leaned back in his chair and smiled. "Now there's a story for you, Hoyt," he said. "Keith Blalock went off to fight, then his woman, Malinda followed him. She cut off her hair and dressed in boys' clothes, so nobody would know she weren't no soldier. They called old Keith in and told him his brother was there."

"Did they ever find out that she was a girl?" Hoyt asked.

"Oh yes, they did. Keith rubbed poison oak on hisself till he got it so bad the doctors couldn't even tell what it was he had, so they sent him home. Then Malinda decided to get out of the army, so she confessed that she was a woman," said Cleve.

"They weren't about to believe her, but she had to do a little unbinding," Uncle Jeeter added.

"Oh," said Hoyt blushing.

"She had to do what?" Bunie asked.

"Never you mind," Josiah told her.

"How about another good old story?" Dovie asked. "Tell us a good Jack tale."

"Tell about raw head and bloody bones, or tailee bone," said Hoyt.

"Why don't you tell us about when you were a young man a'courtin'?" Dovie asked, not wanting her children frightened. "I bet you did a lot of walking when you and Aunt Rosie was sparking."

"Rose was a pretty girl," the old man said without focusing on anything or anyone in particular. "A mighty pretty girl... and I'd of walked the good earth over just to go stand in her shadow."

Dovie was startled by Uncle Jeeter's suddenly soft voice and passionate words.

Jeeter snapped out of his momentary lapse and looked at Cleve. "A good woman will change a lot about a man."

"Did you ever get chased by a panther while you was out walking at night to Aunt Rosie's house?" Leona callously blurted out an obvious request for a story that she had heard before.

"Not chased really, but I was stalked by one," the old man began. "I had my pistol in my belt, and I pulled it out for to blow the old bastard to hell if he got close. He just kept follering me, and when I stopped, he stopped. All I could see was his eyes glowing."

"Then, how do you know it was an old painter?" Leona asked, abandoning the pronunciation she'd learned in school.

"I heared him scream. It sounded just like a woman in pain," Uncle Jeeter said patiently. "He follered me all the way to Aunt Rosie's, so I went in and stayed the night."

"Then how do you know it wasn't a screaming woman with glowing eyes?" the girl persisted.

"Now what woman would be out roaming around at night like that?" Hoyt pushed his twin's shoulder.

"Tell him about that woman you saw," Cleve encouraged the old man.

"Law, have mercy, it liked to scared the pee water out of me," Jeeter began. "I was walking back from Rosie's one night by the light of the moon, and I saw something white. It looked like it was floating through the graveyard. It was up on that hill where the Pittmans bury theirs just past Lucy's Gap."

"Oh, Lucy's Gap's haunted anyway," Hoyt's eyes widened as he spoke.

Dovie noticed that all of the children had perked up, except Dolly who was asleep on Cora May's lap.

"That's what they tell," agreed Jeeter. "Old Lucy was one mean old woman, and the gap's been haunted since she died." Uncle Jeeter paused to look at his eager audience. "Anyway I seen this white thing floating, and I began trotting along my way 'til I ran into Burse Pittman. He asked me if I'd seen Sissy. You know that's what they called his wife. They all called her Sissy. It might have been her name or a nickname. Anyway, I told him that I ain't seen nobody, but I saw something white floating through the graveyard." The old man paused again to pick up his cup from beside his chair and take a sip of water.

"What'd he say?" Leona asked impatiently.

"That's Sissy," he said. "She's out there in the graveyard in her night gown." He said 'she does that, she just wonders out into the graveyard when the moon is full.' He said she'd come on back home later sometimes, and sometimes he had to go out and get her."

"Was she crazy?" Hoyt asked.

"I don't know, but I always took the long way home after that. I don't like Lucy's Gap in the daytime, much less at night."

"Why was Lucy so mean?" Bunie asked. Uncle Jeeter was startled to hear the very little girl speak.

"I don't know. I reckon it was just in her nature. She was Web Berry's daughter," Jeeter took another sip of water and set it down on the floor by his chair leg.



"Old man Web that killed his first wife and baby?" Cleve asked.

"Yeah," Jeeter said and looked at Hoyt. "That's the one that they dug up her skull and hid it in the rafters over where he sat in his house. They say a murderer can't lie with the skull of his victim over his head. He never told about the murder, but he went crazier and crazier."

"Why'd he kill her?" Leona asked.

"He killed them both and threw them off the Bald Ground Cliff so as to be able to marry Aunt Susie," the old man said dramatically.

Cleve played into the children's fear adding, "They say that when he finally died the devil came and took him away in a black carriage with a headless driver."

Dovie looked around at the faces of her children knowing that the night would not be easy.

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Dovie had to poke Cleve to wake him up at church the next morning. Hoyt was so irritable from staying awake to try and hear Uncle Jeeter's stories that Dovie pinched him during the opening prayer to stop him from hitting Cora for sitting too close.

It was the Baptist's Sunday to hold services at the Union Church, and Josiah was not with her. The Baptist and Methodist preachers took turns, but most of the community would attend both. Josiah never came on Baptist Sunday because he had been "churched" by the Baptists long ago for moonshining. Many people had been churched, but they had waited for a new reverend and went back - but not Josiah. He had his entire family moved to the Methodist congregation, and most of the extended family had

followed his lead. Now there was talk about buying out the Baptists and splitting the churches, and Josiah was certainly in favor.

Long ago Cleve had asked why Dovie continued taking them to church every Sunday.

"I ain't the one's been churched. I'll go to worship any time it's there for me," she had told them.

"You ain't ever been churched?" Cleve had asked as he placed another log on the fire.

"Not exactly, I was kicked out of a church one time. There was a Negro church down in Morganton that was having a revival. Back then we always went to revivals no matter what church it was, and it didn't matter what color or what kind of congregation."

"Why'd they kick you out?" the boy persisted pulling a chair up beside his mother.

"There was this big fat woman in front of me and Louella. Well, she got in the spirit and started waving her arms around and the fat on her arms started jiggling around. She had on short sleeves. Law, it was hot in that church. Anyway, her arm fat was waddling around, and me and Louella got to giggling. I guess they thought we was laughing at them for being colored because they told us to get out. We weren't being disrespectful or anything, we just had us a good case of the church giggles."

"I guess you wouldn't get mad if we got the giggles then?" Suda May had asked.

"Oh yes, I'd get mad. I'd pinch your little head right off," Dovie assured her.

Dovie had felt like pinching the heads off all her children that Sunday. When church was over, she decided to walk home with as few of them as possible.

"I'm walking home with Liz," Cleve told her.

"And you're taking your brothers and sisters with you," she ordered.

"No, she's taking her sisters. That's enough to keep us company." Cleve took up a rock and threw it high into the trees as he spoke.

"Well, the more the merrier. You take your brothers and sisters and have a good old time."

"I can't take the little ones. Can't you let everyone from Hoyt and Leona down go on home?"

"No, you take everyone but Laurel and Dolly," Dovie took a paper fan and tried to cool herself.

"I'll take Laurel too," he said with a sigh. "She don't like to be away from Bunie."

The truth was that Laurel and Bunie were Cleve's favorites. He would rather have them than any of the older children.

"Where's Cleve?" Dovie was peeling potatoes for supper when the children returned without their brother.

"He's mad at Liz I guess," said Suda May. "He didn't say a word coming home. Then he took off on up the hill when we got here."

"Well, I guess he'll come home when he gets over it."

"I don't know. He was really mad."

"He can just scratch his little mad place and get happy. Did you younguns eat dinner while you was visiting?"

"No, Liz begged us to stay and eat, but smart aleck Cleve wouldn't hear it."



“Oh good,” Dovie said setting her pan of peelings on the table. “Now I get to cook dinner before I can finish supper.”

Cleve had always been a little moody. He would stomp off somewhere, and then he would return singing some happy song. Cleve loved to grab up his guitar and play a tune any time he could. He had taught Hoyt to play also, and the two of them would often talk Josiah into playing his fiddle with them way into the night.

It was late that night when Cleve finally came in. Everyone was asleep except Dovie. She usually slept soundly, but that night she awoke again and again. She could tell that Cleve had been drinking by the way he stumbled around trying to get to bed. He banged his head on the low door jam at the bottom of the stairs, and his speech was slurred as he cursed. At least he was home, and at last she could sleep.

Dovie didn't sleep well that night at all, however. She woke up again, and there was a strange blue light glowing at the door to the little hallway that led from the kitchen to her bedroom. The sight jolted her fully awake, and she watched it fearfully. She had seen this light twice before. The light had appeared before the deaths of her infant children.

Her mind raced. Would she lose the baby she had carried almost to term? Could this light be for Katherine's child? She had not had this vision before Katherine lost her last baby. She sat up and eventually the light disappeared. Just before dawn she drifted off to sleep again having convinced herself that the light had been her imagination or a dream.

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"Something bad's gonna happen," Leona sang as she entered the house. "And it's all Bunie's fault."

"What's Bunie done?" Cora asked wiping down the table where she had just made biscuits.

"A big ol' black cat crossed her path, and she didn't do anything about it," Leona reported.

"Something bad's gonna happen if you don't carry me up a bucket of water," Dovie warned.

"What was I supposed to do, Mama?" Bunie asked pitifully.

"It's just an old saying. I wouldn't worry if I was you." Dovie took Bunie by the shoulders then rubbed at a smudge on the child's cheek.

"But is there something that the saying says I'm supposed to do?"

"Well, you're supposed to pull a thread from your dress, or turn your hat around. You can cross him off nine times, once for each life. You can turn around and go back the way you come." Dovie patted the girl's back then pushed her toward the day bed in the corner.

"What if the cat's not all black? What if it's black and white?"

"Well, it don't really matter, but I cross them all off just for good measure."

Suda May looked up from the letter she was writing and added, "I cross off dogs and just about everything else."

"I hope you don't cross off rabbits. They're supposed to be good luck," Dovie replied taking up a tomato to cut up for dinner.

"Now I've messed up. What am I gonna do?" Bunie said frowning.

"I wouldn't worry about it. Like I said, it's all just a bunch of old sayings,"

Dovie reassured the child. "Where's Laurel and Dolly?"

"Laurel's cutting flips in the yard to make Dolly laugh," the child answered, getting down a cigar box of pencils and paper.

"Where's Papa?" Bunie asked.

"He's gone down to Morganton with Pierce. They're out at some political rally."

"Aww, why don't he ever take me along?" She chose the longest of the pencil stubs and some paper.

"Now what would a little girl do at a political rally? It's just a bunch of people eating barbeque and listening to a lot of old men talk." Dovie knew that Bunie would love the attention that she would get at such a gathering.

"Don't they have children there?" Bunie tossed the paper and pencil back in the box and shoved it onto the mantel.

"I don't know, for I've never been to one. I just know what your Papa tells me about them." Dovie inspected a second tomato and cut out a bad spot.

"Why don't Papa ever take you along?"

"He would if I wanted to go, but my Daddy always said that there's two things a woman that's a lady won't discuss, and that's religion and politics."

"You talk about the Bible." Bunie flopped down on the rocker.

"That's not the same. I don't argue about God with people from other kinds of churches like the Baptists or the Holiness or the Catholics."

"Catholics?" Bunie asked.



"We don't really know any Catholics or some of them others around here, but

I still wouldn't try to talk religion with them."

Just then an explosion sounded on the hill near the saw mill.

"What in the Sam Hill is that?" Dovie asked nobody in particular.

"I bet it's Cleve and D.W., " Bunie said. "They were arguing about Liz, and then they made up and started acting happy. I think they were drinking a little."

"Drinking....."

Dovie was interrupted as Cora came in with the milk.

"I saved most of the milk, but it's all over my dress. I wish people wouldn't blast stumps while I'm milking. Cleve knows what time of the evening milking's done," Cora said as she set down the milk. "Just look here at this dress."

"Run up the hill and tell Cleve I said to stop that this instant." Another blast shook the house. "That's all we need is for some boys to be drinking and setting off two and three dynamite caps at a time. It sounds like he's trying to blow the mountainside out. Run quick, but don't go too near."

"I'm going too," Suda May jumped up and ran out the door with Cora.

"Law, have mercy, I wish I had that much energy," Dovie said as she stretched her back. As Suda and Cora ran out, Dolly and Laurel ran in and grabbed their mother's skirts.

"It's just your brother. There's nothing to be afraid of," she told the little girls. But, at the same time she felt panicky, as though she couldn't breathe. "*Carrying babies makes you worry about every little thing,*" she thought.

Just then she heard screaming from the hill. She ran out onto the porch and saw Suda May running toward the house as she screamed.

"Mama!" she yelled, her voice broken and raspy.

"Bunie, take the girls upstairs and stay there," Dovie yelled and jumped off the porch without bothering with the steps. She met Suda May at the edge of the yard.

"Oh Lord Mama, Cleve's hurt. I think he's killed," the girl cried.

"Run down the road to Ed and Eva's as fast as you can, and get anyone that's there to come."

The girl merely shook her head and ran off, as Dovie ran as fast as she could the other way. She held onto her protruding belly, and she would never know how she got up the hill so fast. As she ran, she prayed that Suda May had overreacted.

When she reached the field beside the sawmill, the sight was worse than she could have imagined. D.W. had taken off his shirt and wrapped it around one of Cleve's legs. Poor little Cora had torn up her petticoat and tried to bandage the other, but all the cloth was bright red with Cleve's blood. His legs were mangled messes of blood and hunks of flesh that had been torn by the explosion.

"What happened?" She tried to be calm, but her heart raced.

"I ain't sure, Aunt Dovie. I... I can't even say. We was... just raising a little hell, and ... I can't say," D.W. told her. She could smell the strong presence of alcohol about the boys.

"Cleve?" she said hopefully, smoothing back his hair. "Cleve, can you hear me?"

"Mama," Cleve's voice sounded like the little boy that he had once been instead of the seventeen-year-old young man that he was. "Mama, I'm gonna die, ain't I?"

"Son, don't talk that way. Sudie's gone for help," Dovie tried to keep her voice as steady as possible. She saw that Cora had fallen to her knees, and tears streamed down her face. "Go get a quilt and grab all the bandages you can as quick as you can," she told the girl.

Cora wiped at her face with her bare arms and got up to set off down the hill as fast as she could, falling once.

"Mama, I'm sorry...." Cleve said weakly.

"It'll be all right, boy. Hold on. Help's a coming."

Cleve squeezed his eyes closed, his lips were moving, but no sound came out.

Dovie tore her own petticoat, and added to what was already there. She didn't dare take off what was put on earlier for fear of causing further injury. It seemed like an eternity, but neighbors finally came.

"Dovie, you get on down the hill and lay down," Ed told her as he took over.

"You've got to rest now."

"I'm staying right here with my boy."

"Dovie..." Eva began.

"Eva, take her down to the house. The last thing we need right now is to have to deliver a baby. Go on down and lay down, Miss Dovie."

"No... I'll stay out of the way, but I'm staying," she suddenly felt heavy and sick at her stomach. Her arms burned and her chest ached as though it were caught in a vise.

"Dovie Honey, he's unconscious. Please, let me take you down to the house. There are plenty of people here to help," Eva coaxed.



Dovie looked up and saw that several others of her neighbors were there, but she couldn't have even called their names at that point. She didn't even know if she could get up because her legs had gone numb. She felt arms helping to lift her, and she was dully aware of passing Eva and Ed's daughters with bundles of supplies, and someone had brought a kettle of hot water. Eva led her to her bed, and Suda May came and curled up beside her. Dovie stroked her daughter's hair. Her poor children had been through way too much, especially this one. She wondered who had the little girls, but she could hear them moving around on the floor above her. It wasn't long before Ed came in.

"Dovie, Cleve's gone," he said. "He was already gone when we sent you down here, but we kept working on him. I've sent the Wilson boys down to get Josiah."

"Mama, Papa could have saved him," Suda May said softly. "Papa could have stopped..." the girl broke off and sobbed.

"No little'un, not even Josiah could have saved Cleve. He was just hurt too bad," Ed assured her, and Dovie knew it was true. "Just rest, Miss Dovie. You have eleven other children and another one on the way to tend to, as well as those grand babies. You'll need all your strength for that."

When Ed walked out, Dovie rubbed her abdomen. This would not be her thirteenth living child after all. She had to hold onto the infant that would never be teased as unlucky thirteen. Suddenly she was even more exhausted. She felt that she could never move again, and then she remembered her sleepless night. When Ed had told her of Cleve's death, he had been standing exactly where the blue light had appeared.

## Chapter 9 Dovie's Daughter Laurel

Yes, I remember the day that Cleve got killed. I was only four years old, but even Dolly remembers a little bit of that day and she was only two. We were playing outside, and when the first blasts came we squealed, but only for fun. We loved to squeal when the boys were blasting stumps or shooting guns. Then came that big blast that shook the earth, and we screamed for real then. I thought heaven and hell had busted open and it was the end of time. It must have been more than one cap, but there ain't nobody knows for sure. I guess D.W. might know, but he says he don't. When I got in school, his sister, Mary, told me that D.W. said there was more to that day than people know, and that he'd tell it all to someone before he died. I don't know if she made that up or if it's true.

All I know is that some folks blame D.W. and some blame Liz. Some say it would never have happened if it weren't for them, and they're always acting like they figured out something that don't nobody else know. Some mention the day before, but they weren't there. I was there, and somehow I remember a lot of that day. I heard someone say that it was Papa's fault for even having dynamite, but when I turned around to find out who it was, they shut up about it.

We were all walking home from church, and I got really tired, so I asked Cleve to carry me.

"Just how much do you weigh, Punkin' head?" he asked me, and I told him that I weighed three pounds. He tickled me and said I didn't weigh any three pounds. "You weigh at least three hundred pounds," he said as he picked me up.

He carried me along in his arms for a while then he said, "You ain't wet your britches have you?" I told him that I didn't do that any more, so he set me down then picked me up and put me way high on his shoulders.

We had fun walking to Liz's house, and we had fun when we got there. Me and Bunie played with Liz's little sisters and brothers. We didn't have any big kids bossing us around because they were all off playing their own games. We just ran around and rolled down the hill beside the house, stuff like that. When I got tired, I went back to the porch where Liz and Cleve were and sat on Liz's lap. She had these colorful beads, and I was playing with them and wrapping them around my finger. I told her they looked like princess beads, and she took them off and gave them to me. They were mine and nobody else's. I don't usually get stuff that's all mine and that the others don't have.

I sort of drifted off to sleep with my head on Liz's lap, and I heard Cleve say it'd be that way when they got married. He said he couldn't wait to sit by their own house, and her with a baby in her lap. Liz said she wasn't ready to get married, and Cleve told me to get up and go play. They argued. I heard Cleve mention D.W., and Liz's voice got louder, but you know how people are when they get that age. They always have to fuss about something.

Tom had come on over, and Cleve had him take us on home in his car, so we didn't have to walk all the way there. When we were leaving, I gave Liz a hug and thanked her for the beads. Boy, Leona and Bunie were jealous of those beads, but they were all mine. I tucked them down into my blouse, so they would forget about them. Cora said that it was good that I had something all my own, and that I'd hardly had a chance to be special by myself. Bunie is just fourteen months older than me, and we've



always been kind of lumped together like we was the same youngun. Then Dolly was born when I was about two, and she took most of the attention, but Bunie likes to take everybody's notice as much as she can. She says she don't, but she really does.

I think Cleve went back over there later that night, and he was still mad at Liz, but maybe they got over it. I don't know. All I know is that people shut up talking about it when they notice I'm around. I heard some old ladies saying that maybe Cleve did it to his own self, and when I told Cora, she went over to the women and yelled at them. She said that Cleve's a good Christian boy, and he's in heaven now with more stars in his crown than they could ever hope to have.

You know, sometimes I talk to Cleve when I'm by myself. I tell him what's going on with everybody. I like to talk to him at his grave when I go up to the churchyard, and I think he really hears me. Bunie says that I ought to know better than that now that I'm older, but she don't know everything.

The hardest part of it all, the part I hate to think about was when Papa came home. The neighbors were laying Cleve out in the front room where the kitchen is, and they had us all run into Mama and Papa's bedroom. Papa came in and just looked around with big tears in his eyes, then he kissed Mama on the head and went into the front room. Mama had been sitting in the big ol' stuffed arm chair, and she got up and when outside. I got up too, and Cora told me to sit back down, but I told her I had to go to the outhouse.

I didn't really have to go to the outhouse though. I saw Mama going down toward the spring, and I followed behind her. I cut around the other side of the smokehouse and across the corner of the field and came up behind the spring. Mama wasn't at the spring though; she was up on the clay hill on the other side of the creek.

She was sitting on a stump, and crying out loud like a child. It wasn't exactly like a child, but maybe it was something like some kind of wounded animal. She didn't even use her handkerchief.

She really scared me. I just stayed behind the bushes and watched, and little as I was I kept quiet as a scared little bunny. She got out her handkerchief and tried to blow her nose, but she kind of gagged and threw up before she could get it done. I had tears running down my face too, and my nose was running something awful, but I didn't want her to hear me. I pulled a big leaf off a tree and blew my nose on it real quiet like. I wiped my face on my apron just as quiet as I could.

Finally she got down on her knees with her hands on the ground and prayed. I couldn't hear anything she said but "please, please, please." She finally got up and went down and washed her face at the creek. She splashed her face, and used her cupped hands to scoop up water to drink too, and then she dried her face on her apron. Then she rinsed out her handkerchief and scrubbed at her dress and apron. She rinsed it out again and held it to the back of her neck. It was then that I slipped down to the creek and put my arms around her. She didn't say a thing, she just held me tight and she kept her arms around my shoulders as we walked back to the house. Once I felt... like a tear maybe... falling on the top of my head. It's strange what a body remembers ain't it?

The day of Cleve's funeral was the saddest day that ever was. Papa walked around like his insides were gone, and Mama kept a handkerchief in her hand and sort of twisted it like when she wasn't crying into it. Cleve's coffin was set up on Papa's big old trunk.



It was really foggy that morning on the day we took him up to the churchyard.

I really wanted to get my shoes and put them on. Church is a long way anyway, and it seems even longer when you're barefoot. Well, those shoes were in Papa's big old trunk, and I couldn't get at them for Cleve's body was up there. I told Cora, and she told me I'd have to wait. When they picked Cleve up and took him out, there was so much crying and commotion that I couldn't get anybody to help me get the trunk open, and I was kind of scared to touch it since there had just been a dead person on it. I felt bad about that. Then I started feeling sorry for myself because I'd lost my brother, and now I'd have to follow him to the graveyard barefoot. We had extra relatives riding in the car with Papa and Mama, and the big boys had left from their own homes. Hoyt felt sorry for me, and he picked me up and carried me. I told him that he shouldn't do that because I weigh three hundred pounds, but he carried me all the way to the cemetery anyway. Can you believe that? I really did believe that I weighed three hundred pounds. Well, it must have been hard for Hoyt to carry me anyway, because he was only about nine years old at the time and the graveyard is a couple of miles from our house, and it's mostly up hill.

It's odd the things that get into your mind at a time like that. Somebody threw all of Cleve's clothes off in that deep gully where we throw junk. I think it must have been Katherine. Anyway, he had this yellow rain slicker, and I could see it down in the gully. I'd lay down by that gully and look at that yellow slicker. I wanted so bad to go down and get it, but it's dangerous down there, and there might be snakes. I don't even know why I wanted it, I just did. I knew if I got it they'd just throw it away again, so I'd go there for the longest time and just look at it. I guess it finally got covered over, and I finally stopped going.



It's funny about those beads too. Somebody broke them, and I don't know who did it or why they did. I found the beads, and Tom's wife, Esther, took them away from me. Now, why would she do a thing like that? What did Esther want them for? I asked for them later, but she said that she didn't know what happened to them. I finally found them stuffed way down in Papa's trunk all wrapped up in tissue paper, but I don't know who put them there or why. They can just stay there for now anyway, and one day I'll get them. I don't know why I want them, but I do.

Things have never been the same at home without Cleve. Gurney was born about a month or more after Cleve died, and that helped some. People are always saying how Gurney looks so much like Cleve and all, but I don't see it. They've got Gurney so spoiled that we can't do a thing with him. I love him and all, and I always have liked to keep him with me, but he's as mean as a little striped snake.

Papa took to drinking. We all know he's always took a little nip from time to time, but he was drinking almost every night of the world then. He didn't drink in the house, but he would head right to the shed, and he came on in the house drunk and he'd never done that before.

I know he took Cleve's death hard, it was hard on us all, but I think he was sort of a big baby about it. For the first time ever, I was ashamed of the way Papa was acting. Sometimes when he was really drunk he'd sit and talk about how his world had ended. Once he said that Gurney was the only reason he was still living, and that really hurt me and Mama and Bunie to hear it. Poor ol' Bunie thought she'd caused Cleve's death by not crossing off a black cat anyway. Other times he'd talk about how he might as well

take his shot gun and blow his own brains out, and that really worried Mama and everybody.

One day he started talking like that when it was just me and him in the house. Oh, he said he'd just blow his own brains out and leave this old world. Life wasn't worth living, and on and on and on. Well, one day when I was about seven or eight, I got tired of it. As Cora says, I'd just had my 'nough. I pulled the straight chair up by the mantle and took his shot gun down; you ought to have seen his face then. I jumped down and threw it to him and said, "Here you cussed old man, do it or shut up the hell up about it."

I was scared when I realized what I had done. I just knew I was a gonner then. I didn't know if he was about to shoot me or hisself, but he got up and put the gun back up above the mantle. He was real easy like, he cut a look at me like he hated my very guts, and then he walked out the door. I didn't see him until the next day, and neither of us mentioned it ever again. He didn't stop drinking, but he didn't come in drunk as much, and he never threatened to kill hisself again.

Like I said, they threw Cleve's clothes down in the gully, but Hoyt got ahold of Cleve's guitar and hid it away at Tom's house. I don't think they'd throw that away, but Hoyt was scared they would. Papa's fiddle is laying on top of his and Mama's wardrobe. He took it up one time long after Cleve died, and played the awful saddest tune I ever did hear. Oh, it made my chest hurt to hear it. When he finished, he said that he'd never play the fiddle again, and he really hasn't. I hope that Hoyt or Gurney learn to play, because there ain't been any music in this house in a long long time.

## Chapter 10 Dovie's Daughters 1936

Laurel looked all around her for help. Her stomach was queasy, her head throbbed, and she felt totally and utterly trapped by the old man standing before her. A politician from off the mountain had her attention, and he did not show signs of letting her go easily. He had come from Morganton to campaign, and Laurel vaguely remembered that he was not from the same political party as her father.

"Back before there were cars, it used to take an extra day to get the election totals down to the court house in Morganton, and that was if they went just as fast as they could go and the weather was with them," old Mr. Shook said pointing his cigar at Laurel.

Laurel knew that trips to Morganton had usually involved at least three days before automobiles, and she had never known of anyone making it in less than two days. Still, she listened patiently, and felt the vomit rise in her throat. She swallowed hard. Her parents had raised her to be especially polite to older people, but she was nearing her limit.

"Well, little lady," the old man continued, "Uncle Julius Barrier carried the totals down in eighteen and eighty eight when Benjamin Harrison was running against Grover Cleveland. We all called him uncle, but he wasn't actually my uncle at all. We called most of the old people 'uncle'."

Laurel nodded politely. She knew what people were called, and she knew that it was Ben Barrier who had carried the election results in 1888 and not Julius at all. She had heard the story all her life.

"That year Uncle Julius walked into the court house, and they all told him that Harrison had already won. 'That can't be true,' says Uncle Julius, 'for everybody on



Jonas Ridge voted for Grover Cleveland.' Boy, he was mad. I guess he just couldn't believe that Harrison could win if everyone in his precinct voted for Cleveland."

Laurel laughed politely, although she had heard the story told better many times.

"That's really funny, Mr. Shook," she said smiling. "If you'll excuse..."

"Call me Uncle John, child. Your father and I have been friends for many years.

Why, I remember when Josiah used to carry the mail to Morganton once a week," the old man continued.

"Why that's nice. If you'll excuse me, Uncle John, my sister needs me," Laurel said and quickly slipped away to join Bunie and Leona. It was the 1936 elections, Roosevelt was running for the second time, and Dovie's younger daughters were helping at the polls.

"Let's get away from that old man. He wants me to call him Uncle John, and he thinks Papa used to carry the mail," she said pushing her sisters toward the outhouse.

"Laurel," Josiah limped over to his daughters. "You stay away from old man Shook. I bet anything he's been hitting the jug already." He looked around and back at the girls, "I guess it's time for you little gals to head on home before it gets rough around here."

A little less than a year after Cleve's death, a backhoe operator had backed into Josiah and injured his hip. Now he walked with a cane, and could not work for the highway commission any more.

"That Shook man wants Laurel to call him uncle," Bunie laughed as she passed the story to her father.

"She'll play hell," said Josiah. "Don't you dare call that dirty old son of a bitch anything. You younguns go on home, now."

"But, we want to help with the counting," Leona whined.

"No, I have to keep order around here no matter how many of these men start sneaking a little drink, and you girls will just get in the way. Now go on home to your Mama. This is no place for my girls, especially you, Leona," he warned. At twenty, Leona still had her fainting spells from time to time, and the doctors had still not found a cause. "Now, do like I tell you," Josiah said pointing his cane.

It was only four o'clock, but the girls gathered their things and started on their long, cold walk home. They had helped at the polls since before daybreak, but at least they could keep warm inside the new school building this year. They had worked at the polls during the last election when the voting was held outside with only a bonfire for warmth. The voting booths were at the back of the store, and they only had time to go inside to rest a few times during the day. Now, in the auditorium of the new school, they could rest comfortably when their help wasn't needed.

At the rock wall beside the school, they stopped and the girls had pulled their ugly brogan shoes out of a big paper bag. They changed out of their nice shoes and placed them in the bag to keep from wearing them out.

"I hate these damned brogans," Leona said.

"Me too," Bunie agreed.

Their Papa bought all of his children a big sturdy pair of brogan shoes every fall when he sold a hog or two at slaughtering time. The girls had pulled galax the summer before and bought more feminine shoes for church and school. They could only afford

second hand shoes from the sale store in Crossnore, which the locals called the Rag Shakin', and they had gone barefoot in summer and wore the brogans most of the time in winter to protect their precious investment. The store took donations from more well-to-do people, and resold items to profit Crossnore School.

"One of these days I'm gonna have shoes... lots of shoes. I'll have a closet full of clothes all to myself and boxes of shoes all over the bottom," said Bunie.

"You'll have to share your closet with your husband," Leona said, pulling a piece of candy out of her pocket.

"Heck no I won't, he can have his own darned closet," answered Bunie.

"By-words," Leona said unwrapping her candy. "Boy, I wish Papa would walk up and hear you using all those by-words just now."

"Oh, he would raise cane about Bunie saying darned and heck, and never catch you with those big old oaths you use," Laurel added.

"I don't see how Papa can cuss like he does and pitch such fits every time one of us says a little by-word," Bunie said as she stopped and picked up a piece of milky quartz flecked with mica.

"You don't do as Papa does, you do as Papa says to do," said Leona, paraphrasing the words they often heard from their father.

Bunie turned the quartz over and dropped it to the ground.

They walked quietly toward home until they heard fast foot falls crunching the gravel road behind them and turned.

"My nose itches. I smell peaches. Here comes Zeb with a hole in his britches," chanted Leona.



Zeb ignored Leona and ran to catch up with the girls.

"Hey, where you girls headed?" he said as he fell in step beside Laurel.

"What direction does it look like we're going?" asked Leona.

"I reckon you're in the direction of your house."

"Now where in the heck else would you think we're going?" she snapped.

"Don't be so cranky, Leona. I'm just making conversation," Zeb shrugged and turned back to Laurel.

"Want me to carry that bag?"

Laurel stuffed the bag under one arm and clutched it tightly. "No thanks," she said. She was ashamed of the shoes she wore already, and she certainly didn't want him to know that they were carrying their good shoes to keep from wearing them out.

"Guess what, Laurel, Daddy has to go to Crossnore next Tuesday to see the doctor, and he said he'd go early and give me a ride to school. Do you want to meet us down at the road and ride with us?"

"Thank you, no, Mama would have a fit."

"Oh you could talk her into it."

"No, I don't want to make her mad," Laurel shifted the bag as she spoke.

"Come on, she trusts Daddy," Zeb began walking backward while talking.

"Well, I just don't want to ask her. I'm afraid she won't like it."

"Don't be such a chicken," he said urgently.

"Turn around before you kill yourself," Laurel said as he stumbled.

"Ask her anyway, and let me know by Sunday," Zeb stopped at his road. "Bunie and Leona could go along maybe."

"Oh, thanks for thinking of us," Leona said sarcastically.

"Let me know," Zeb told Laurel as he cut his eyes toward Leona. "Let me know," he said again before running up the hill toward his house.

"What's with that little dough faced bastard," Leona said as she watched him go.

"Leona, one day you're going to slip and say something like that in front of Mama and Papa, and then you've had it," Bunie warned.

"Aw, Mama and Papa won't do a thing to me," she said smugly.

The three walked on quietly for a moment then Leona asked again. "What's with little ugly Zeb following you around like a sick calf, Laurel?"

"Why, Zeb's a good looking fellow," said Bunie.

"Then why don't you let him court you a little bit?" Leona persisted looking at Laurel.

"I just don't want to," Laurel shrugged as she spoke.

"Well, she don't have to if she don't want to," Bunie added.

Laurel looked sideways at Bunie. They weren't about to let Leona know why Laurel suddenly found Zeb distasteful. On the Sunday before Zeb had told Laurel that he wanted to hurry home because he was thirsty for chicken and his mother was frying some for dinner.

"He's just trying to be cute," Bunie told Laurel when he was out of ear shot.

"Well, it's just stupid. Can't he just act like he had some common dog sense, and say he's hungry?" Laurel disdainfully watched him walk down the road.

"Maybe he's just hungry and he don't want you to think he'd rather run home to his mama's chicken instead of walk home with you."

“Why in the heck don’t he just say so then? Why does he have to be such an idiot?”

“Leona would say you’re just being picky.”

“What do you think?”

“Zeb’s just fine. I wouldn’t want to be like Leona. I mean there’s no hurry to get married.”

“Married! He’s our fourth cousin. Papa said he was, and I sure wouldn’t want to marry any boy who’s kin to me.” Laurel looked up and saw the moon already in the sky.

“There’s nothing wrong with marrying a fourth cousin. Papa’s just unreasonable about people marrying distant kin. Everyone came from Adam and Eve.”

Laurel looked at the sky again. It was as though there was a stain that the real moon had left and that it was not the real moon at all. She finally sighed and said, “Zeb’s just fine for a friend. I think the world of him in some ways, but the thought of... courting a cousin whose thirsty for chicken just makes me ill, and for heaven sakes don’t tell Leona. I never would hear the end of it.”

Laurel liked Zeb, but for some reason it was as though someone had pulled the plug and drained all his personality and charm away when he had made the chicken comment. It was the same day that Mama had told her that Zeb was some kin to her.

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The girls walked on quietly as they had crossed the bridge over Camp Creek and headed up their own road.

“Old Aggie Wall thought she was so smart, but I got her,” Bunie finally said.

“She can’t read a lick, but she said, ‘That’s the letter D and it stands for Democrat. That’s



the people I don't want to vote for.' So I said, 'Let's just mark off the whole row of them then with a big X and the counters will know you're not voting for them.'

"And she fell for it?" Laurel asked.

"That's what we did, and she walked away happy. She was bragging that she didn't vote for the Democrats," Bunie answered grinning.

"You tricked that poor old lady. I'm telling Papa," said Leona.

"Oh, like you wouldn't do the same thing if you thought of it," said Bunie.

"It ain't cheating. I heard tell that the Republicans are paying for votes again, so turn about is fair play," Laurel said.

"Look what you've done," Leona changed the subject. "You've got a smudge of something on my blouse."

"This is my blouse the same as it is yours," Laurel said angrily. "Mama said that you could go work in Morganton for the summer if we would do all your work here, and you'd buy clothes for all of us."

"I don't give a damn what Mama said," Leona shoved her hands in her pockets as she spoke. "I worked and bought those clothes, and they're mine. You don't need to go ruining them."

"You heifer," returned Bunie, "I'll tell Mama and Papa you said that."

"Go ahead. I'll just faint and that will be the end of that," said Leona smugly.

The girls had come to the porch, so they stopped bickering before Dovie could hear.

Leona ran in first, and her younger sisters hung back briefly.

Bunie shielded her mouth and leaned toward her sister as she spoke in a low voice: "Leona thinks she's the prettiest girl around here, but her face wouldn't make a good Sunday go to meeting butt for me."

"It's about time you girls got home," Dovie stopped churning as Bunie and Laurel followed Lenoa into the house. "I don't know why your Papa wants to take a bunch of girls down to the voting. I've needed you all day here."

The girls put away their coats as Dovie gave orders. Laurel looked longingly at her school books. Bunie had made it to her senior year with little effort, but for Laurel getting A's in the tenth grade was the greatest struggle she could imagine.

"Bunie you can finish this churning. Then you can go down to the smokehouse basement and get a jar of peaches to make a cobbler. Laurel, you can peel taters and bake some bread. Leona, you can cook the rest of supper. Dolly, get that basket of apple turnovers for the boys and come with me to the saw mill."

Leona rolled her eyes and argued, "Here we go again. Those boys get turnovers while we get to work our hind ends off after helping at the polls since before sunrise."

"Those boys get one day off from the CC Camp to do a little work at the saw mill, and all you do is complain about standing around at the polls. We all have to do what we can, Leona," Dovie scolded gently.

"Where's little lazy Gurney, and why does Dolly get to go carry a basket instead of help here?" Leona persisted.

"Dolly, if you must know, has sewed all day, and Gurney's helping at the mill. He wants to train up for a sawyer," said Dovie. "Gurney can work with the horses and load pulp wood as good as any man. There ain't a lazy bone in that boy's body."

"He's too busy being spoiled to do too much," mumbled Leona as Dovie and Dolly went out the door. When the door was closed, she told her sisters, "Call me when it's time to cook." She went into her parents' bedroom where Hoyt kept his gramophone, and soon the scratchy sounds of 78-rpm records drifted through the house.

"That lazy bitch is gonna lay in there playing music and eating candy while we work, and then she'll expect us to help her do her part," said Laurel.

"Well, let's just not give in this time," suggested Bunie.

Bunie and Laurel worked as a team to get their tasks done. They took turns at the churning and potato peeling. They worked together on making the cobbler and chatted as they brought water up from the spring for cooking. When the work was done, Laurel got a book and Bunie picked up an old movie magazine that Leona had brought in long ago, and then they called Leona.

It took awhile for Leona to appear. She got out pots and poured water for boiling potatoes and beans.

"Why didn't you get me some beans when you went by the smokehouse?" she asked her sisters.

"We thought you might like to pick out your own. You're never happy with what we bring," Laurel said without looking up from her book.

"Well, run down and get me some, and Bunie can set the table," said Leona.

Bunie motioned for her younger sister not to move. "Setting the table goes with the cooking," she said. "And, you can do it your own damned self."

"You get your damned little lazy ass up off that chair and do what I say," snapped Leona. "What do you think you're doing that's so important anyhow?"



"What's it to you? Are you writing a book on it?" said Bunie without moving.

"Yes, by God, it is my damned business," said Leona.

Bunie threw down the magazine and grinned sarcastically at Leona. "Well, you can just kiss my ass and make it a love story." Bunie and Laurel had heard the line at school and had been anxious to use it on Leona.

"I ain't gonna kiss your big ol' butt; it looks too much like your face," returned Leona.

"You go piss up a crooked limb," said Bunie.

"You..." Leona ran over and pulled Bunie out of the rocking chair. "You get up and help me right now." She flung her sister toward the stove.

"No!" screamed Bunie, and the two girls fought.

There was slapping and pulling of hair as Laurel screamed "Stop, stop." Leona punched Bunie in the stomach as hard as she could with both fists, and when Bunie doubled over in pain, Leona knocked her sister to the floor. Leona came down across the small of Bunie's back with the broom then dropped it down where she had just hit and fell down on the broom with a knee on each side of it. She rocked her weight back and forth while Bunie screamed.

Laurel grabbed up the mop and smashed it across Leona's back knocking the wind out of her temporarily.

"I'll kill you, you damned little heifer!" Leona screamed as she jumped up and started kicking at Laurel. She hauled back for a good kick, and Laurel grabbed her foot on the uptake. Laurel held the foot as high as she could so Leona could not reach her. Bunie sat up sobbing, and eventually began laughing.

"Keep her hopping. Keep her hopping," Bunie called as Leona jumped on one foot to try and keep her balance.

The hopping went on for what seemed to be forever for both girls. Laurel operated on the fear that Leona would kill her if she let go, and Leona hopped and screamed obscenities at her sisters. Finally the front door banged open.

"What in the Sam Hill are you girls doing?" asked Dovie. "Laurel, let her go."

"I can't, she'll kill me," panted Laurel.

"Grab Leona, John," Dovie said over her shoulder to her son.

John grabbed Leona, who continued kicking out toward her sister until John had her arms clasped firmly at her sides.

Dolly stood just outside the door with her eyes wide and her face pale.

"They help each other, but they won't lift a finger to help me," Leona hurried to tell her side of the story first. "I have the hard part."

"She started it," Bunie said as tears rolled down her face again. "She yanked me out of the chair, and she had the broom across my back with her knees on it. She rocked back and forth, until Laurel pulled her off. I bet I have bruises too."

"I had to do something," said Laurel hugging herself with both arms. "She just kept rocking on that darned broom."

"There she did it, Mama," said Leona struggling to get away from her brother.

"There... she... did... cuss!"

"Cuss! Cuss!" screamed Laurel, then she began shrieking angrily.

"Stop it!" yelled Dovie. "Stop it! Stop it! I said stop it!" She grabbed up a decayed piece of firewood and threw it against the wall above Laurel's head. The rotten wood shattered, scattering bark, dirt, and bits of kindling everywhere.

"You could have killed me with that thing," Laurel stopped screaming then accused her mother. "If that wood wasn't doody, you'd have busted my head open."

"I knew what I was doing," snapped Dovie. "Leona go get supper, now. Laurel, go up stairs and cool yourself down, and Bunie, go to my bedroom and let me see that back. When your Papa comes home, I might just have him shoot every one of you. And you quit laughing John, I'm not in the mood...."

Laurel ran up the stairs and she heard Leona bang the back door as she ran out.

The upstairs room where the boys slept was cool and peaceful, and Laurel flopped down on Gurney's narrow bed and hung over to peek down a knot hole.

Below she could see her mother holding a hand over her own mouth and holding John's arm with the other hand. She was shaking, and with a better look, Laurel could tell that she was laughing. The sight of Leona hopping around the kitchen was something that none of them would not soon forget.

"Hey, Mama," John was still laughing as he spoke, "Did you notice that Leona forgot to faint?"

"Well she didn't faint at all, did she?" said Dovie softly looking up at John.

"She didn't at that." Laurel's mother nodded at John then went into the other room to look at Bunie's back.



## Chapter 11 Dovie's letter - 1944

Dovie sat in her rocker by the coal stove. The boys had closed off the fireplace years ago, and they had chiseled out a hole in the chimney for the stove pipe. She had a bag of apples to her left, a big pot of fresh water to her right, and a metal pan on her lap for peelings.

"Betty, hey Betty," she called to Katherine's youngest daughter who was upstairs alone.

"What, Grandma?"

"I want you to come write me a letter while I peel these apples."

She heard the seventeen-year-old's footsteps as she came from the girl's bedroom, through the boy's bedroom, and down the steep wooden stairs.

"Who are we writing?" Betty said as she took a pen and a tablet of paper from the cigar box on the mantel.

"Your great aunt Cora, way out in Colorado," Dovie answered. She was glad that Betty had developed a talent for shorthand, and that she was willing to take down letters for practice.

Betty sat down in the rocker that was considered to be Josiah's, and looked expectantly at her grandmother.

"When you're ready to transfer this letter, I want you to look in the drawer of my little table by the bed and get the new little tablet that Gurney bought me. It's got pink paper with a little rose down in the corner... the prettiest stuff you ever saw."

Betty nodded and flipped to the first page of the notebook.

"Dear Cora," Dovie began. "I hope you and yours are well. Thank you for the yard goods. I know you sent a lot more than I sent money for, and I sure do thank you. Don't think you have to send so much ever time, I just like what you pick out for the store a lot better than what I can get anywhere else. I also want to thank you for the long letter. You always write that my letters are too short and that you want to know more about us, so I'm sending a nice long letter to let you know all that is going on."

Dovie looked at Betty, "You don't mind do you?"

"Why, no, Grandma, if it'll get me out of peeling apples, I'll sure write and rewrite," Betty answered, pushing her short auburn hair back from her face.

Dovie studied her granddaughter briefly. The child was no angel, but she was as pretty as a picture, and she was willing to do anything Dovie asked. How a daughter of Katherine and Bill could be so accommodating was beyond Dovie.

"I'm going to tell you a little about what's happening with my children as you asked. They're pretty good young'uns, but they're a worriment in times like these," Dovie continued.

"What's more, I'm telling you the truth of the matter, for I want to clear my mind."

"James and John may be twins, but two brothers could not be less alike. John is taller; James is darker and he's the biggest flirt you've ever seen. John takes to book learning easier than James, but James can take an automobile apart and put it back together in no time. John is solid, and James is as thin as a willow limb, but maybe he'll fill out before too long. The one thing that they have in common is that they both got in trouble, and Josiah had to go down to Morganton with them trying to get it all sorted out.

I knowed what would come of it before they ever came home that day, and I didn't like it a bit."

Betty interrupted, "Grandma, are you sure you want to tell her all of this? I know Mama and Bunie would have a fit if nobody else did."

"What they don't know won't hurt 'em," Dovie said looking over her glasses at Betty. "Just keep writing."

"It all started when John's wife started buying things right and left. She bought a radio, a gramophone, and a washing machine all in the space of two months. She nagged John until he bought a new car, and then she got pregnant. They'd been living down in Marion and working in the cotton mill. You know, it's that same one where the union tried to come in and those people got shot. I know you do for I sent you the page from the newspaper. Anyway, in case you forgot, there was a strike back in 1929 when hired deputies shot and killed six strikers. Our cousin Essie's man and her boy were supposed to be at the mill that day, but she got a feeling and didn't wake them up that morning. Then there's Annie Higgens, Charlie Perry's mama, she said that she went to the mill that day and was locked in overnight. Well... what was my point? Oh yes, I was talking about John's wife, Leotta."

"You want me to leave out this mess about the strike?" Betty asked.

"No I want you to leave in everything, just like I was sitting here and talking to her. Anyway," Dovie continued her story, "she got pregnant and didn't feel like going to the mill any more, so she quit and stayed home. I don't blame her much. I couldn't stand to work in all that lint and mess, but they didn't have enough to buy all she wanted, so she took all the nice things she'd bought and went home to her Mama. Now, she didn't



take the car, for she don't know how to drive, and John gave up that pretty little mill house and came home. He wanted to buy her a diamond ring and kind of coax her back, you know. He was pulling galax, and him and James fired up that old saw mill again.

Now, you know how James is. Sometimes I wonder if he ever will settle down and get married. He's always got some money scheme, and he's always got girls fighting over him and all like that. Well, he got this plan for making money, and he talked John into running some liquor. I guess they made it at their own still too. They got caught, and thank goodness it was in Burke County because Josiah used ever contact he could come up with and got them off the hook. The catch was that they'd have to join the Army. Like I said, I had a feeling that it would happen, but I sure wasn't pleased. That was right after the 1940 election, and we weren't in the war I guess, but it was going on.

They came home with the mail and a box of stick candy for me. You know how I like a little piece of candy now and then. John was the one that was acting overly happy, and James was the one that was quiet as could be for once. Ever time I looked at James, I thought he'd bust out bawling. They called down Laurel and Bunie and Dolly and gave them some chocolate bars they'd got at the store, and there was a letter for Laurel.

Laurel don't like everybody knowing her business, and she'll generally talk to me about it all later, but she read that letter out loud. It was from Vaughn Pike, and I expect she left some parts out. He was being shipped off to Hawaii, and he wrote all about how pretty people said it would be, and how he'd send her some presents from there as soon as he was settled in. Now I didn't doubt but what he would; he's a good boy and real kind to Laurel. Laurel was real tickled that he was going somewhere exciting, and that he

wouldn't likely be sent to Germany if the need came up, poor youngun. She did get a couple of presents though.

Anyway, John was acting all happy, and he said that he and his little wife, Leotta, had made up, but she'd be staying with her mother awhile. He asked if I'd keep check on her and make sure she was all right, and I said I sure would, but then I asked why he wanted me to check. James couldn't say a thing. He just kept moving things around on the mantle, and finally asked where the clock key was.

John said that Vaughn's mama wasn't the only one that could be proud of her soldier boy son, and that I was fixing to have two soldiers. "Just think of all that you're giving your country," he said, and I told him that hoped I wouldn't have to give too much. He started talking all fast like about serving the country and making the nation safe. James stopped looking for the key, and sat down.

Gurney came in from outside with a load of wood sometime during all this, and he just dropped his load in the wood box and stood there mad as fire. He listened to John awhile then he called him a horse's behind (but he didn't say behind). He stomped out the door and slammed it shut. Poor little fellow, he's only fifteen years old, but he knows that he don't want his brothers going off.

I'll never forget poor Dolly sitting there with big old tears in her eyes. Laurel and Bunie tried to put on a good show, and Laurel said that maybe they would get sent to Hawaii with Vaughn and that they could chase hula girls around. She allowed as to how they could keep Vaughn from chasing after hula girls, and that was the first time that she'd let on that she liked him for more than a friend.



Poor little Laurel, I thought she'd broke her heart when Vaughn got killed at Pearl Harbor. After awhile, she married Charlie Davies from over in Pineola. I was surprised that she'd marry him knowing that he'd already joined up. It scared her to death when he was wounded in the calf of the leg, but they just sent him to a hospital in England and then on back to his unit. We think he's behind enemy lines, James is in Germany, and we think John is in Italy.

My family's scattered all over the globe now. Bunie's married and lives just up by the church. Dolly slipped off and got married in South Carolina at the same time that Laurel did. Dolly lives in Morganton, and Laurel's in business school in Charlotte. Leona's in beauty school in Charlotte, but she and Laurel never see one another. Hoyt's a whole lot better now. I'm sure I wrote to you when it happened that he was nearly killed in an accident down at the CC Camp. He had to have skin grafts over a couple of years, and we thought he'd never be able to do much, but now he's driving a bus in Gastonia. Suda and Cora work at the sock factory down near Morganton, and Tom's at the carbon plant. I wish Katherine would go back to teaching, but I don't guess she ever will. She says it'd take more education now, and Bill won't put up with her going back to school. She stays home with the younguns. Thank goodness I still have Gurney at home, and Suda's boy Max. This old house would be awful lonesome with just me and Josiah."

Dovie broke off and stared out the window toward the garden. Betty sat quietly and waited for her grandmother to continue.

"Betty, put that up in my night table with the little pink tablet," Dovie finally said. "We'll finish sometime..."



## Afterward 1960

The bang on the wall sounded like an explosion when it woke Dovie.

“Lee, you little hellions quit banging that basketball on the side of the house,” yelled Leona. If the ball hadn’t gotten Dovie up, Leona surely would have. She wished her daughters didn’t use such profanity, especially when they were talking to their children.

The sun was streaming in under the window shades when Dovie slowly rolled over and got up from her nap. Oh, it hurt so much to get out of bed these days. Every bone and muscle was stiff, and she took an aspirin and washed it down with water from the glass on her bedside table. She took the side combs from the bun in her long gray hair and smoothed it as best she could manage.

“Ricky, hey Ricky,” she called to the grandson whose shadow she saw as he walked by her window and across the back porch. “Why don’t you come in here and help me with my shoes.”

“Sure, Grandma,” the boy answered and jumped off the end of the porch.

*“That Ricky is a good boy,”* she thought.

He didn’t bother with the main door, but came in the door that went directly into Dovie’s bedroom from the front porch. Pulling up a footstool he sat down and helped the old lady into her black orthopedic shoes.

“Are these new shoes, Grandma?” he asked tying the laces.

“Yes, they are. Ain’t they nice?” she asked.

“They’re a lot like the old ones, but they’re shinier and they’ve got these little designs sewn in.”

"I have to get this same kind, but these are the prettiest ones I've found."

"They sure are nice," the boy said. He always said the kindest thing he could find to say to his grandmother.

"The salesman said they'd last me the rest of my life," she said looking at the shoes. "But, I told him that I don't want no shoes that'll last me that long. I like a new pair now and again."

"Well, you got him told."

"Here, help me up and you can go on back out and play."

"Oh, I'm not playing. I'm going out to look at Junior's new Ford Fairlane. He might let me drive it up the hill and back."

"Are you old enough to drive?"

"I'll get my license next year. I've already got my permit."

"Well, quit growing up so fast, and I'll let you go see if Junior'll let you drive."

Ricky laughed as he helped her stand up and get steady, then he bounded back out the door.

As Dovie passed the dresser mirror, her image startled her. It was nothing new, her image had startled her for years. It was funny how a woman could feel sixteen inside although she was constantly reminded of her eighty years. How different her life was now. Josiah was gone. Dolly and Cleve were gone. Victoria, Ida, and their husbands were all gone. Even Mortimer, the town where she had met Josiah was gone, washed away in the flood of 1940, and Kawanii was gone too.

She made a face at the mirror and headed through a curtain into the hall separating the bedroom from the kitchen/sitting room and joining the oldest part of the

house to the newer section. At some point someone had made a closet of half the hall's length and covered it with another curtain. The closet was filled with the clothes of people who would never wear them again. Some were outgrown and many belonged to people who were dead and gone. She had often wanted to have the clothes cleaned out, but she couldn't bring herself to get it done. She pushed back the curtain and looked at the suits and dresses. Why was this hallway always so cold?

She pushed through another curtain over the door to the kitchen, and retrieved her cane from the doorway.

"What do I need to do to help get dinner ready?" she asked her daughters. They were all there for a change, and all were working toward the common goal of cooking a huge amount of food.

"Just sit down out of the way," said Leona.

Dovie didn't like the way her children were now ordering her around as if she were a child, but she didn't feel like making a point of it today.

"Grandma, do you want me to turn the television on for you?" asked her grandson Rob.

"Naw, the stories ain't on today," Dovie told him.

"What did you do before you had the soaps to watch?" Rob asked.

"I listened to them on the radio."

"And what did you do before the radio?"

"I guess we told stories, but most of the time, I guess I was too busy to care."

"Doing what?"



"Chores. We didn't have any washing machine, or electric stove, nor none of that."

"I never thought about all that before. I guess you had it pretty hard."

"I was happy though."

"Hey, Grandmaw, what's the greatest invention they ever came up with in your whole lifetime."

Dovie thought of all the things that she had seen for the first time. "Rubber britches," she finally said.

"What?"

"Rubber britches, plastic pants. You know, those things they put over a baby's diaper. I'll never forget the time you threw yours in the fire when you were little."

"Aw, you're kidding," Rob said.

Just then Rob's cousin Mark came in to join them.

"Rob, you boys stay out of here," Laurel called to her nephew.

"Oh, let him alone," said Dovie. Rob was Dolly's son, and she had an especially soft spot for the motherless boy. Dolly had passed away nine years ago, pregnant with the second child that the doctors said she should never have.

Suddenly there was a scream in the pasture in front of the house, then a series of screams from two voices. Dovie's daughters all ran to the yard and were yelling at the girls who were screaming.

"What's wrong?" she heard, and "Is that you, Judy? Honey, what is it?"

As the women investigated the commotion, one of the smaller girls held the back door open and two of the smallest ran into the kitchen. They pulled the warming drawer

of the electric stove open and got out biscuits, dropping them into a small bucket that was often used for picking berries. When the older girl spotted her grandmother, her eyes widened.

“Quick, grab that jar of jelly,” she urged in a conspiring loud whisper.

One of the little girls scooped up the jar of homemade huckleberry jelly, and they all slipped quietly out the back door. The older girl reappeared at the screen.

“Thanks, Grandma,” she said and hurried away before the women returned.

Dovie’s daughters and daughters-in-law insisted on the adults going first, feeding the babies as they ate. The rest went by age group, so Dovie knew that these little girls had a long wait ahead of them.

“What was wrong out there?” Dovie asked.

“I don’t know, but I’m ready to bust some little hind ends,” said Bunie. “I don’t know which ones it was. They stood up behind the hedge and screamed like something was after them, and then they started laughing and ran off. If I could’ve got ahold of them, I’d have killed them.”

“Well, that’s younguns for you,” Dovie said. “Now you know how it feels for a bunch of younguns to raise a ruckus all the time.”

“Yeah, and you always said we’d get paid back through our own children,” Bunie agreed.

“You better make plenty of biscuits,” said Dovie.

“We’ve made plenty,” Cora said.

“No, I looked. You ain’t made near enough.”

"Just look for yourself," said Cora pulling out the warming drawer to demonstrate. She did a double take and turned back to her mother, "I thought we made more than that. Laurel, make another pan or two and we'll put them in the oven when the ham comes out."

The kitchen smelled of warm, fresh food. There was ham, chicken, green beans, corn on the cob, potato salad, and all sorts of pies and cakes. It was enough to feed a small town instead of a small family reunion.

Dovie got up for a glass of fresh water from the bucket. A sink had been installed years ago, but the line had frozen and ruptured so many times that her sons had given up on repairing it. Josiah had passed on a few years after Dolly, and now Dovie could no longer live in her own home during the winter. A few grandchildren would come and stay with her so that she could return for most of the summer. She sipped her icy, cold spring water, and headed out the door.

She walked out onto the porch and held onto a post watching a spider make her web on the railing. It was good to be home again. She looked about her. The rose trellis, now dilapidated, was still covered with blossoms. The gate to the pasture needed tending, and two of the little boys were taking a running go, then jumping on the gate and swinging down toward the smoke house.

"Max, hey Max," she yelled at her grown grandson who was coming up from the spring..

"Did you have a good nap, Grandma?" he asked as he climbed the rocks that had long ago been stacked up to serve as steps.

"Oh, I rested a speck," she answered. "I want you to tell me something."



“Sure,”

“Who in the world are all these people out here? There’s just a sea of people.”

“Why Grandma, you know who they are. They’re your family.”

“This ain’t the Poarch reunion already?”

“No, Grandma, this is just the immediate family.”

“All these people are our family?”

“Why Grandma, if I’d march them all past you, you could call them every one by name and tell who they belong to. They’re your children and your grandchildren and your great grandchildren and even a great great or two.”

“Well there’s no wonder I’m so tired then,” she said, and walked back into her house.

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## Appendix A

### **Timeline of Dovie's Life**

## Appendix A

### Timeline of Dovie's Life

- 1869      Statewide school law  
The new State Constitution, adopted in 1868, contained a relatively strong article on public education. Generally unpopular at the time because it was viewed as the product of a "carpetbag government," it was, nevertheless, a rather progressive document for that period and later came to be recognized as such. It required the General Assembly to "provide by taxation and otherwise for a general and uniform system of public schools, wherein tuition shall be free of charge to all of the children of the State between the ages of six and twenty-one years."
- 1876      **Josiah born**
- 1880      **Dovie born**
- 1885      Dovie's family leaves
- 1888      The first school house was built near a spring at Cleve Parson's garden. It was 18 by 20 feet with split puncheon floor and puncheon benches. Miss Minnie Wright was teacher of this subscription school. The term lasted about 60 days per year.  
-1888 election when Grover Cleveland was defeated by Benjamin Harrison (Post master Ben Barrier carried the vote to Morganton, and was said to react with, "That can't be, for everybody on Jonas Ridge voted for Grover Cleveland.")
- 1889      Second school built after first was torn down on Saturday night. It was a log building with a fireplace in one end, and two shuttered windows. (Land had been donated by Benjamin Barrier in 1884)
- 1890      Church held in school building (it had been held in homes before that)
- 1892      **Josiah goes to work for (Ritter) Lumber Company at age 16**  
-Loven Hotel built. (on site of current Cold Springs Lodge) Anderson Loven also received a franchise from State of NC and built a toll road from Joy to Pineola
- 1897      Dovie meets Josiah
- 1898      **Dovie and Josiah are married (August 1)**  
Linville Falls Post office built

- 1899 Katherine born (May 29th)**  
**Colorado family visits in September**
- 1900** -The mail was carried by foot or horseback from Morganton (Julius, George, and John Barrier carried the mail at this time... taking turns a week about) John was the one in the flood incident who lost the mail and became religious  
 - J.P. Barrier deed of land to Methodist and Baptist registered (for the Union Church) "An agreement, we the Methodist Church South and Missionary Baptist to hearby agree that if any friction should arise between either denomination that the party disagreeing shall sell or buy at reasonable price." The deed stated that if either party should become dissatisfied, the other was to set a price to buy or sell.  
 -General Grant Wilcox sold his mercantile store in Ashe County and moved to Watauga County and established Wilcox Drug Company.
- 1901 Thomas Jefferson (Tom) born (son April 13)**  
 -First school at Linville falls built
- 1902 Josiah goes to Colorado to work for the Denver-Rio-Grande Railway**
- 1904** Josiah returns and resumes work with lumber company (during this time he travels with them to Virginia and West Virginia)
- 1905 James and John born (April 9)**  
 -by this time Morganton had a water system, telephones, electricity, a town government, a fire department "of sorts," and "barrooms on every corner" (Mull 71)
- 1906** Fire on the Ridge. Ritter sent trainload of men and water to help, but little headway was made. Legend has it that people prayed and rain doused the fire.
- 1907 Josiah's younger brother Pierce gets married to Lib Miller (he's 25 she's 17)**  
 -Tom Clark gets a new International Harvester car (solid rubber tires, seven spoke wheels and carbide head lamps)
- 1908 Grover Cleveland (Cleve) born (June 11)**  
 From 1908-1927, the Model T would endure with little change in its design. Henry Ford had succeeded in his quest to build a car for the masses.



- 1909 Pierce takes over the post office and builds a store. Later he adds grist mill to the side.
- 1910 **Benjamin Franklin born (Ben) (dies at birth)**  
**Camp Creek School opened (Katherine taught here later)**  
 -Will Shuffler becomes mail carrier from Ashford to J. Ridge (small pox spread to his family and Post Master's family through mail contact)
- 1911 **Cora Charity born (April 6)**  
**Josiah begins work with the State Highway Commission**
- 1912 A.M. Huger came up from Henderson and stayed with Pierce... he named many of the area's features... see ad for Cliffside Cottage  
 - Will Shuffler became Justice of the Peace (until 1952)
- 1913 **Suda May born (March 31)**
- 1914 -Jonas Ridge was in the Upper Creek Township until it was taken off and became Jonas Ridge Township in this year  
 -Pierce buys Model T Ford truck and has converted into school bus that runs from Jonas Ridge to Linville Falls, and to the Bark House and back.  
  
 -By 1914, the moving assembly line enabled Ford to produce far more cars than any other company.  
 -Archduke Ferdinand assassinated. Triple Entente with France, Russia and Great Britain formed. Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy formed. July 28 Austria declares war on Serbia. August 1 Germany declares war on France. August 3 Great Britain declares war on Germany. May 7 Lusitania torpedoed and sunk by Germans (1,195 lives lost and this was followed by ruthless sinking of Allied and neutral ships.
- 1915 **Lazelle and Lucy born (die at birth)**  
 -Gurley's sawmill moved to Steele Creek and later as far as the Watering Trough
- 1916 **Hoyt and Leona born (Sept 13)**  
**Great flood of 1916**  
 - school held in the upstairs of the store and Post office building  
 -Tanks introduced into war
- 1917 -World War I declared in April due to Germany's announcement of unrestricted submarine warfare.  
 -Flu epidemic  
 -(plus everything was scarce due to war)  
 -Cabe Perry born (October 20)

- 1918**      **War ended November 11 (Armistice)**  
               -Dovie travels to Steele creek to visit (in summer) and one of the boys (James) is badly injured when a dump car's brakes fail. John is also in the car along with some other boys. The twins were 12 at the time.
- 1919**      John Barrier donates additional land to the school
- 1920**      **Bunie Irine (Reenie) (April 24)**
- 1921**      **Laurel Ellen (April 3)**  
               School was held in the old Union Church Building
- 1922**      New school finally opened (consolidated with Camp Creek and Linville Falls)
- 1923**      **Dolly Maude (born June 2 – sickly child)**
- 1924**      **Katherine has a miscarriage.** Burning of north wing of Broadoaks Sanatorium
- 1925**      **Gurney Hoysted born (September 31)**  
               **-Cleve dies in dynamite accident on August 1st**  
               -Tannery destroyed in fire  
               -Linville Falls consolidates school with Crossnore  
               -Pierce buys Dodge Graham Truck and has it converted into a school bus.. used for many years and from the Bark house and back to school then to Linville Falls and back to school.
- 1927**      **Early miscarriage... last pregnancy**  
               -no longer toll road that had been built by Loven
- 1928**      **-Flood of 1928 (unexpected)** Duke Power had not lowered the water level and there was a crack in Linville dam. The emergency spillway saved the town of Morganton
- 1929**      **Katherine suffers a second miscarriage**
- 1930**      -Chestnut blight  
               **-High school students moved to Crossnore at this time**
- 1933**      **Methodists (Rev. Joe Green) bought the Union Church for \$300**

Methodists tore down the old church with the help of the Works

Progress Administration and built the new one

Baptists build also.. 30'X40' building with pull curtains for divider  
(services held in old Jonas Ridge School building during construction)

- 1936      **Josiah is in wreck while at work and injures hip (can no longer work for highway commission)**  
-Will Shuffler becomes Burke County Commissioner
- 1938      **-Construction on new school building (rock) began. This was a Public Works Administration project and hired (among others) local residents at 30 cents an hour.**  
-Sept 30<sup>th</sup> New Methodist Church dedicated (Rev. P.W. Tucker and Rev. Fred Barber assisting)
- 1939      **New school complete** (features included a blue velveteen curtain with gold fringe for the stage)
- 1940      **Flood of 1940** (Indian artifacts, bones, bodies of small children found and a baby washed down to Morganton from North Cove)
- 1943      **Army plane crashed** on Rocky Knob in Gingercake Acres near Bow Franklin's house
- 
- 1949      **Dolly Maude dies on September 3**  
- brick lunch room/teacher apartments built using much of the lumber from the old school in framing
- 1958      Josiah dies (August 3)
- 1968      Dovie dies (January 4)

#### Notes:

Early families went to Morganton for supplies about twice a year, and it took at least two days per trip.

Salem Franklin bought a Model T Ford truck and converted it into a school bus that ran from Jonas Ridge to Linville Falls, and then to the Bark House and back to Jonas Ridge.



Ritter workers could take out a week's groceries at the Commissary store.

The Bald Ground was also known as the Indian playground.

## VITA

Sharon Delaine Pritchard Price was born in Morganton, North Carolina on March 17, 1953. She attended elementary schools in that city and in Hampton, Virginia. She attended Morganton High School for one year and graduated from Avery County High School in Newland in May 1971. The following autumn, she entered Appalachian State University and left to pursue a career as a radio copywriter, newsperson, and announcer. She returned to Appalachian State University and was awarded the Bachelor of Arts degree in English/Secondary Education in 1999. In the fall of 2000, she reentered the English Department at Appalachian State University and began study toward a Master of Arts degree. She later added a second course of study toward a Master of Arts degree in Appalachian Studies. While in this program, she worked as an assistant to the Visiting Writers Series and as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. Her double degree will be awarded in August of 2005. Ms. Price currently teaches in the English Department at Western Piedmont Community College in Morganton, North Carolina.

Sharon Price is a member of the English honor society Sigma Tau Delta. She is married to Larry Jackson Price who also graduated with a Master of Arts from Appalachian State University. Their home address is 4997 U.S. Highway 64 in Morganton, North Carolina. She is the daughter of the late Harry Junior Pritchard and Pansy Barrier Pritchard who lived in Jonas Ridge, North Carolina.